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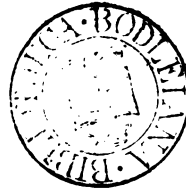
SONGS OF THE SIERRAS.



SONGS OF THE SIERRAS

BY

JOAQUIN MILLER.



LONDON:

LONGMANS, GREEN, READER, AND DYER.

1871.


280. j. 281.

TO MAUD.





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PREFACE.

WHEN the roving Arazona Indians wish to descend from the mountains and mingle with the something less savage settlers, they first send down a small aged man ; if he is slain, they say the loss is not great, and remain in their fastnesses, but if well received, others follow. If this little book should be well received, it is big enough for my purpose ; if not, it is big enough for all purposes.

These lines were written on the rough edges of the frontier, amid the scenes described, where I have spent all but the last few months of my life.

There, walled from the world by seas on one hand, and the Sierra Nevada mountains in savage grandeur on the other, the heart would sometimes hunger after a gentler life, and the soul go out after the sweet ideal, a dove on the waters, and bring back dreams, and with them clothe facts and tales taken from the lips of mountain men as they sat and told them around their camp and cabin fires. Of such creations are these songs.

The city of Mexico was my Mecca, and San Francisco, to me, a marvel of magnificence and civilization. This last summer I crossed the Rocky Mountains, and for the first time saw New York ; a great place for cheap books, and a big den of small thieves.

I hesitate to confess these facts lest the clever critic and reader might, on the principle that no good thing can come out of Nazareth, look no further than this admission ; and they who only seek a safe opportunity to condemn, do so at once.

But feeling that the book under the circumstances must have crudities apparent to the cultivated, but which I cannot now correct, I think it due. It must go from my pen to the public without the advantage of criticism before publication. Where this was written, rhyming is considered a mild type of insanity ; while here, the reading of manuscript to a stranger is very properly deemed an assault with wilful intent to do bodily harm.

I almost feel that an apology is due for the bold act of a nameless young man leaving the woods of the Great West, and seeking the capital of the world, to publish ; and am very doubtful as I write this. I think how much better it might be for me—to say nothing of the reader—to be subduing the lands, digging the gold, and moulding the politics of the plastic New World, instead of vexing the brain with fancies, and perhaps courting crucifixion in a strange land. But poetry with me is a passion that defies

reason; so I have counted the cost and will be true to my love. I bring this rough quartz specimen torn from the outcropping of the ledge, to those who know gold from grosser metal. I am very much in earnest, and invite a correct assay. It would be wrong to let me spoil a good mountaineer to make a bad poet, however much it might please me.

JOAQUIN MILLER.



The foregoing is the preface to a thin book printed here last winter, but not published further than to send less than half-a-dozen copies to the press. As the reader sometimes is curious to know the origin of a new book, and this includes almost all that could be sought, I let it stand.

The contemplated satisfaction of having been candid with the reader, whatever may be the fate of my book, induces me to write all this; to be candid and plain even in the face of the knowledge

that the world adores the great mysterious, and mistakes the negative virtue of silence for dignity.

After all, if a sincere man has anything to say, why shall he not say it?—J. M.

London, April, 1871.





ARAZONIAN.



*Because the skies were blue, because
The sun in fringes of the sea
Was tangled, and delightfully
Kept dancing on as in a waltz,
And tropic trees bow'd to the seas,
And bloom'd and bore, years through and through,
And birds in blended gold and blue
Were thick and sweet as swarming bees,
And sang as if in Paradise,
And all that Paradise was spring,
Did I too sing with lifted eyes,
Because I could not choose but sing.*

*With garments full of sea-winds blown
From isles beyond of spice and balm,
Beside the sea, beneath her palm,
She waits as true as chisell'd stone.
My childhood's child! my June in ~~May~~!
So wiser than thy father is,
These lines, these leaves, and all of this
Are thine, a loose, uncouth bouquet.
So wait and watch for sail and sign;
A ship shall mount the hollow seas,
Blown to thy place of blossom'd trees,
And birds, and song, and summer-shine.*

*Shall I return with lifted face,
Or head held down as in disgrace,
To hold thy two brown hands in mine?*



ARAZONIAN.

AND I have said, and I say it ever,
As the years go on and the world
goes over,
'Twere better to be content and clever
In tending of cattle and tossing of clover,
In the grazing of cattle and the growing of grain,
Than a strong man striving for fame or gain ;
Be even as kine in the red-tipp'd clover ;
For they lie down and their rests are rests,
And the days are theirs, come sun come rain,
To lie, rise up, and repose again ;
While we wish, yearn, and do pray in vain,
And hope to ride on the billows of bosoms,
And hope to rest in the haven of breasts,

Till the heart is sicken'd and the fair hope dead ;
Be even as clover with its crown of blossoms,
Even as blossoms ere the bloom is shed,
Kiss'd by kine and the brown sweet bee,
For these have the sun, and moon, and air,
And never a bit of the burthen of care ;
And with all of our caring what more have we ?
I would court content like a lover lonely,
I would woo her, win her, and wear her only,
And never go over this white sea wall
For gold or glory or for aught at all."

He said these things as he stood with the Squire
By the river's rim in the fields of clover,
While the stream flow'd under and the clouds flew
over,
With the sun tangled in and the fringes afire.
So the Squire lean'd with a kind desire
To humour his guest, and to hear his story ;
For his guest had gold, and he yet was clever,
And mild of manner ; and, what was more, he,
In the morning's ramble, had praised the kine,

The clover's reach and the meadows fine,
And so made the Squire his friend for ever.

His brow was brown'd by the sun and weather,
And touch'd by the terrible hand of time,
His rich black beard had a fringe of rime,
As silk and silver inwove together.
There were hoops of gold all over his hands,
And across his breast, in chains and bands,
Broad and massive as belts of leather.
And the belts of gold were bright in the sun,
But brighter than gold his black eyes shone
From their sad face-setting so swarth and dun,
Brighter than beautiful Santan stone,
Brighter even than balls of fire,
As he said hot-faced in the face of the Squire:—

“The pines bow'd over, the stream bent under
The cabin cover'd with thatches of palm,
Down in a cañon so deep, the wonder
Was what it could know in its clime but calm.
Down in a cañon so cleft asunder

By sabre-stroke in the young world's prime,
It look'd as if broken by bolts of thunder,
Riven and driven by turbulent time.
And this in the land where the sun goes down,
And gold is gather'd by tide and by stream,
And maidens are brown as the cocoa brown,
And a life is a love and a love is a dream ;
Where the winds come in from the far Cathay
With odour of spices and balm and bay,
And summer abideth for aye and aye,
Nor comes in a tour with the stately June,
And comes too late and returns too soon.

“ She stood in the shadows as the sun went down,
Fretting her curls with her fingers brown,
As tall as the silk-tipp'd tassel'd corn—
Stood strangely watching as I weigh'd the gold
We had wash'd that day where the river roll'd ;
And her proud lip curl'd with a sun-clime scorn,
As she ask'd, ‘ Is she better or fairer than I ?—
She, that blonde in the land beyond,
Where the sun is hid and the seas are high—

That you gather in gold as the years go on,
And hoard and hide it away for her
As a squirrel burrows the black pine-burr ?'

“ Now the gold weigh'd well, but was lighter
of weight

Than we two had taken for days of late,
So I was fretted, and, brow a-frown,
I said, ' She is fairer, and I loved her first,
And shall love her last come the worst to worst.'
Now her eyes were black and her skin was brown,
But her lips grew livid and her eyes afire
As I said this thing : and higher and higher
The hot words ran, when the booming thunder
Peal'd in the crags and the pine-tops under,
While up by the cliff in the murky skies
It look'd as the clouds had caught the fire—
The flash and fire of her wonderful eyes.

“ She turn'd from the door and down to the river,
And mirror'd her face in the whimsical tide ;
Then threw back her hair, as if throwing a quiver,

As an Indian throws it back far from his side
And free from his hands, swinging fast to the
shoulder,

When rushing to battle ; and rising she sigh'd
And shook, and shiver'd as aspens shiver.
Then a great green snake slid into the river,
Glistening, green, and with eyes of fire ;
Quick, double-handed she seized a boulder,
And cast it with all the fury of passion,
As with lifted head it went curving across,
Swift licking its tongue like a fierce desire,
Curving and curving, lifting higher and higher,
Bent and beautiful as a river moss ;
Then, smitten, it turn'd, bent, broken and doubled,
And lick'd, red-tongued, like a forked fire,
And sank, and the troubled waters bubbled,
And then swept on in their old swift fashion.

“ I lay in my hammock : the air was heavy
And hot and threat'ning ; the very heaven
Was holding its breath ; and bees in a bevy
Hid under my thatch ; and birds were driven

In clouds to the rocks in a hurried whirr
As I peer'd down by the path for her ;
She stood like a bronze bent over the river,
The proud eyes fix'd, the passion unspoken,
When the heavens broke like a great dyke broken :
Then ere I fairly had time to give her
A shout of warning, a rushing of wind
And the rolling of clouds with a deafening din,
And a darkness that had been black to the blind,
Came down, as I shouted, ' Come in ! come in !
Come under the roof, come up from the river,
As up from a grave—come now, or come never !'
The tassel'd tops of the pines were as weeds,
The red-woods rock'd like to lake-side reeds,
And the world seem'd darken'd and drown'd for
ever.

“ One time in the night as the black wind
shifted,
And a flash of lightning stretch'd over the stream,
I seem'd to see her with her brown hands lifted—
Only seem'd to see, as one sees in a dream—

With her eyes wide wild and her pale lips press'd,
And the blood from her brow and the flood to her
breast ;

When the flood caught her hair as the flax in a
wheel,

And wheeling and whirling her round like a reel,
Laugh'd loud her despair, then leapt long like a
steed,

Holding tight to her hair, folding fast to her
heel,

Laughing fierce, leaping far as if spurr'd to its
speed . . .

Now mind, I tell you all this did but seem—
Was seen as you see fearful scenes in a dream ;
For what the devil could the lightning show
In a night like that, I should like to know !

“ And then I slept, and sleeping I dream'd
Of great green serpents with tongues of fire,
And of death by drowning, and of after death—
Of the day of judgment, wherein it seem'd
That she, the heathen, was bidden higher,

Higher than I, that I clung to her side,
And clinging struggled, and struggling cried,
And crying, waken'd, all weak of my breath.

“ Long leaves of the sun lay over the floor,
And a chip-monk chirp'd in the open door,
But above on his crag the eagle scream'd,
Scream'd as he never had scream'd before.
I rush'd to the river: the flood had gone
Like a thief, with only his tracks upon
The weeds and grasses and warm wet sand;
And I ran after with reaching hand,
And call'd as I reach'd and reach'd as I ran;
And ran till I came to the cañon's van,
Where the waters lay in a bent lagoon,
Hook'd and crook'd like the hornèd moon.

“ Here in the surge where the waters met,
And the warm wave lifted, and the winds did fret
The wave till it foam'd with rage on the land,
She lay with the wave on the warm white sand;
Her rich hair trail'd with the trailing weeds,

And her small brown hands lay prone or lifted
As the wave sang strophes in the broken reeds,
Or paused in pity, and in silence sifted
Sands of gold, as upon her grave.
And as sure as you see yon browsing kine,
And breathe the breath of your meadows fine,
When I went to my waist in the warm white wave
And stood all pale in the wave to my breast,
And reach'd for her in her rest and unrest,
Her hands were lifted and reach'd to mine.

“ Now mind, I tell you I cried, ‘ Come in !
Come in to the house, come out from the hollow,
Come out of the storm, come up from the river !’
Cried, and call'd, in that desolate din,
Though I did not rush out, and in plain words give her
A wordy warning of the flood to follow,
Word by word, and letter by letter :
But she knew it as well as I, and better ;
For once in the desert of New Mexico
(I had heard of a place where the Arozit
Did shoot gold bullets at buffalo,

And she was with me in search of it)
I threw me down in the hard hot sand,
Utterly famish'd, and ready to die,
And a speck arose in the red-hot sky—
A speck no larger than a lady's hand—
While she at my side bent tenderly over,
Shielding my face from the sun as a cover,
And wetting my face, as she watch'd by my side,
From a skin she had borne till the high noon-tide,
(I had emptied mine in the heat of the morning,)
When the thunder mutter'd far over the plain ;
Like a monster bound or a beast in pain,
She sprang the instant, and gave the warning,
With her brown hand pointed to the burning skies.
I was too weak unto death to arise,
And I pray'd for death in my deep despair,
And did curse and clutch in the sand in my rage,
And bite in the bitter white ashen sage,
That covers the desert like a coat of hair ;
But she knew the peril, and her iron will,
With heart as true as the great North Star,
Did bear me up to the palm-tipp'd hill,

Where the fiercest beasts in a brotherhood,
Beasts that had fled from the plain and far,
In perfectest peace expectant stood,
With their heads held high, and their limbs a-quiver ;
And ere she barely had time to breathe
The boiling waters began to seethe
From hill to hill in a booming river,
Beating and breaking from hill to hill—
Even while yet the sun shot fire,
Without the shield of a cloud above—
Filling the cañon as you would fill
A wine-cup, drinking in swift desire,
With the brim new-kiss'd by the lips you love.

“So you see she knew—knew perfectly well,
As well as I could shout and tell,
The mountains would send a flood to the plain,
Sweeping the gorge like a hurricane,
When the fire flash'd, and the thunder fell.
Therefore it is wrong, and I say therefore
Unfair, that a mystical brown wing'd moth
Or midnight bat should for evermore

Fan my face with its wings of air,
And follow me up, down, everywhere,
Flit past, pursue me, or fly before,
Dimly limning in each fair place
The full fix'd eyes and the sad brown face,
So forty times worse than if it was wroth.

“I gather'd the gold I had hid in the earth,
Hid over the door and hid under the hearth;
Hoarded and hid, as the world went over,
For the love of a blonde by a sun-brown'd lover;
And I said to myself, as I set my face
To the east and afar from the desolate place,
'She has braided her tresses, and through her tears
Look'd away to the west, for years, the years
That I have wrought where the sun tans brown;
She has waked by night, she has watch'd by day,
She has wept and wonder'd at my delay,
Alone and in tears, with her head held down,
Where the ships sail out and the seas swirl in,
Forgetting to knit and refusing to spin.
She shall lift her head, she shall see her lover,

She shall hear his voice like a sea that rushes,
She shall hold his gold in her hands of snow,
And down on her breast she shall hide her blushes,
And never a care shall her true heart know,
While the clods are below, or the clouds are above
her.'

“ On the fringe of the night she stood with her
pitcher

At the old town pump: and oh! passing fair.
'I am riper now,' I said, 'but am richer,'
And I lifted my hand to my beard and hair;
'I am brown'd by the sun, storm-stain'd by the sea;
I am white of my beard, and am bald, may be;
Yet for all such things what can her heart care?'
Then she moved; and I said, 'How marvellous fair!'
She look'd to the west, with her arm arch'd over;
'Looking for me, her sun-brown'd lover,'
I said to myself, with a hot heart-thump,
And stepp'd me nearer to the storm-stain'd pump;
As approaching a friend; for 'twas here of old
Our troths were plighted and the tale was told.

“How young she was and how fair she was !
How tall as a palm, and how pearly fair,
As the night came down on her glorious hair !
Then the night grew deep and the eye grew dim,
And a sad-faced figure began to swim
And float in my face, flit past, then pause,
With her hands held up and her head held down,
Yet face to face ; and her face was brown.
Now why did she come and confront me there,
With the mould on her face and the moist in her hair ?
And a mystical stare in her marvellous eyes ?
I had call'd to her twice, ‘ Come in ! come in !
Come out of the storm to the calm within !’
Now, that is the reason that I make complain
That for ever and ever her face should arise,
Facing face to face with her great sad eyes.
I said then to myself, and I say it again,
Gainsay it you, gainsay it who will,
I shall say it over and over still,
And will say it ever, for I know it true,
That I did all that a man could do
(Some good men's doings are done in vain)

To save that passionate child of the sun,
With her love as deep as the doubled main,
And as strong and fierce as a troubled sea,
That beautiful bronze with its soul of fire,
Its tropical love and its kingly ire—
That child as fix'd as a pyramid,
As tall as a tula and as pure as a nun—
And all there is of it the all I did,
As often happens, was done in vain.
So there is no bit of her blood on me.

“She is marvellous young and is wonderful fair,”
I said again, and my heart grew bold,
And beat and beat a charge for my feet.
Time that defaces us, places, and replaces us,
And trenches the faces as in furrows for tears,
Has traced here nothing in all these years.
'Tis the hair of gold that I vex'd of old,
The marvellous flow and flower of hair,
And the peaceful eyes in their sweet surprise,
That I have kiss'd till the head swam round,
And the delicate curve of the dimpled chin,

And the pouting lips and the pearls within,
 Are the same, the same, but so young, so fair !'
 My heart leapt out and back at a bound,
 As a child that starts, then stops, then lingers.
 'How wonderful young !' I lifted my fingers
 And fell to counting the round years over,
 That I had dwelt where the sun goes down.
 Four full hands, and a finger over !
 'She does not know me, her truant lover,'
 I said to myself, for her brow was a-frown
 As I stepp'd still nearer, with my head held down
 All abash'd and in blushes my brown face over ;
 'She does not know me, her long lost lover,
 For my beard's so long and my skin's so brown,
 That I well might pass myself for another.'
 So I lifted my voice and I spoke aloud :
 'Annette, my darling ! Annette Macleod !'
 She started, she stopp'd, she turn'd, amazed,
 She stood all wonder with her eyes wild-wide,
 Then turn'd in terror down the dusk wayside,
 And cried as she fled, 'The man is crazed,
 And calls the maiden name of my mother !'

“ Let the world turn over, and over, and over,
And toss and tumble like a beast in pain,
Crack, quake, and tremble, and turn full over
And die, and never rise up again ;
Let her dash her peaks through the purple cover,
Let her plash her seas in the face of the sun ;
I have no one to love me now, not one,
In a world as full as a world can hold ;
So I will get gold as I erst have done,
I will gather a coffin top-full of gold,
To take to the door of Death, to buy
Content, when I double my hands and die.
There is nothing that is, be it beast or human,
Love of maiden or the lust of man,
Curse of man or the kiss of woman,
For which I care or for which I can
Give a love for a love or a hate for a hate,
A curse for a curse or a kiss for a kiss,
Since life has neither a bane nor a bliss,
To one that is cheek by jowl with fate ;
For I have lifted and reach'd far over
To the tree of promise, and have pluck'd of all

And ate—ate ashes and myrrh and gall.
Go down, go down to the fields of clover,
Down with the kine in the pastures fine,
And give no thought or care or labour
For maid or man, good name or neighbour ;
For I have given, and what have I ?
Given all my youth, my years, and labour,
And a love as warm as the world is cold,
For a beautiful, bright, and delusive lie.
Gave youth, gave years, gave love for gold,
Giving and getting, yet what have I
But an empty palm and a face forgotten,
And a hope that's dead and a heart that's rotten ?
Red gold on the waters is no part bread,
But sinks dull-sodden like a lump of lead,
And returns no more in the face of heaven.
So the dark day thickens at the hope deferr'd
And the strong heart sickens and the soul is stirr'd
Like a weary sea when his hands are lifted,
Imploring peace, with his raiment drifted
And driven afar and rent and riven.

“ The red ripe stars hang low overhead,
Let the good and the light of soul reach up,
Pluck gold as plucking a butter-cup ;
But I am as lead and my hands are red ;
There is nothing that is that can wake one passion
In soul or body, or one sense of pleasure,
No fame or fortune in the world’s wide measure,
Or love full-bosomed or in any fashion.

“ The doubled sea, and the troubled heaven,
Starr’d and barr’d by the bolts of fire,
In storms where stars are riven, and driven
As clouds through heaven, as a dust blown higher ;
The angels hurl’d to the realms infernal,
Down from the walls in unholy wars,
That man misnameth the falling stars ;
The purple robe of the proud Eternal,
The Tyrian blue with its fringe of gold,
Shrouding His Countenance, fold on fold,
All are dull and tame as a tale that is told.
For the loves that hasten and the hates that linger,
The nights that darken and the days that glisten,

And man that lieth and maids that listen,
I care not even the snap of my finger.

“ So the sun climbs up and on and over,
And the days go out and the tides come in,
And the pale moon rubs on the purple cover
Till worn as thin and as bright as tin ;
But the ways are dark and the days are dreary,
And the dreams of youth are but dust in age,
And the heart gets harden'd, and the hands grow
 weary,
Holding them up for their heritage.

“ And the strain'd heart-strings wear bare and
 brittle,
And the fond hope dieth, so long deferr'd,
And the fair hope lieth in the heart interr'd,
Stiff and cold in its coffin of lead ;
For you promise so great and you gain so little ;
For you promise so great of glory and gold,
And gain so little that the hands grow cold ;
And for gold and glory you gain instead
A fond heart sicken'd and a fair hope dead.

“ So I have said, and I say it over,
And can prove it over and over again,
That the four-footed beasts on the red-crown'd
 clover,
The pied and hornèd beasts on the plain
That lie down, rise up, and repose again,
And do never take care or toil or spin,
Nor buy, nor build, nor gather in gold,
Though the days go out and the tides come in,
Are better than we by a thousand fold ;
For what is it all, in the words of fire,
But a vexing of soul and a vain desire ? ”





WITH WALKER IN NICARAGUA.



*There is no dead so beautiful
As is the white cold coffin'd past ;
This I may love nor be betray'd ;
The dead are faithful to the last ;
I am not spouseless—I have wed
A memory—a life that's dead.*



WITH WALKER IN NICARAGUA.

I.

HE was a brick, and brave as a bear,
As brave as Nevada's grizzlies are,
A Texan tigress in her lair,
Or any lion of anywhere ;
Yet gentle as a panther is,
Mouthing her young in her first fierce kiss,
And true of soul as the north pole-star ;
Tall, courtly, grand as any king,
Yet simple as a child at play,
In camp and court the same alway,
And never moved at any thing ;
A dash of sadness in his air,
Born, may be, of his over care,
And, may be, born of a despair

In early love—I never knew ;
I question'd not, as many do,
Of things as sacred as this is ;
I only knew that he to me
Was all a father, friend, could be ;
I sought to know no more than this
Of history of him or his.

A piercing eye, a princely air,
A presence like a chevalier,
Half angel and half Lucifer ;
Fair fingers, jewell'd manifold
With great gems set in hoops of gold ;
Sombrero black, with plume of snow
That swept his long silk locks below ;
A red serape with bars of gold,
Heedless falling, fold on fold ;
A sash of silk, where flashing swung
A sword as swift as serpent's tongue,
In sheath of silver chased in gold ;
A face of blended pride and pain,
Of mingled pleading and disdain,

With shades of glory and of grief;
And Spanish spurs with bells of steel
That dash'd and dangled at the heel—
The famous filibuster chief,
By his white tent mid tall brown trees
That top the fierce Cordilleras,
With brown arm arch'd above his brow,
Stood still—he stands, a picture, now—
Long gazing down the sunset seas.

Success had made him more than king,
Defeat made him the vilest thing
In name, contempt or hate can bring;
So much the leaded dice of war
Do make or mar of character.

Speak ill who will of him, he died
In all disgrace; say of the dead
His heart was black, his hands were red;
Say this much, and be satisfied;
Gloat over it all undenied;
I only say that he to me,

Whatever he to others was,
Was truer far than any one
That I have known beneath the sun,
Man, maid, or saint, or Sadducee,
As boy or man for any cause—
I simply say he was my friend
When strong of hand and fair of fame:
Dead and disgraced, I stand the same
To him, and so shall to the end.

I lay this crude wreath on his dust,
A wild wreath of sad memories
Recall'd here by these colder seas.
I leave the wild bird with his trust,
To sing and say him nothing wrong;
I wake no rivalry of song.

He lies low in the levell'd sand,
Unshelter'd from the tropic sun,
And now of all he knew not one
Will speak him fair in that far land.

Perhaps 'twas this that made me seek,
Disguised, his grave one winter-tide ;
A weakness for the weaker side,
A siding with the helpless weak.

A palm not far held out a hand,
Hard by a long green bamboo swung,
And bent like some great bow unstrung,
And quiver'd like a willow wand ;
Beneath a broad banana's leaf,
Perch'd on its fruits that crooked hang,
A bird in rainbow splendour sang
A low sad song of temper'd grief.

No sod, no sign, no cross or stone,
But at his side a cactus green
Upheld its lances long and keen ;
It stood in hot red sands alone,
Flat-palm'd and fierce with lifted spears ;
One bloom of crimson crown'd its head,
A drop of blood, so bright, so red,
Yet redolent as roses' tears.

In my left hand I held a shell,
All rosy lipp'd and pearly red ;
I laid it by his lowly bed,
For he did love so passing well
The grand songs of the solemn sea.
Oh shell, sing well, wild, with a will,
When storms blow loud and birds be still,
The wildest sea-song known to thee !

I said some things, with folded hands,
Soft whisper'd in the dim sea sound,
And eyes held humbly to the ground,
And frail knees knit in the warm sands.
He had done more than this for me,
And yet I could not well do more ;
I turn'd me down the olive shore,
And set a sad face to the sea.

* * * *

II.

WHAT strange strong bearded men were these
He led down the Cordilleras,

Fierce fighting to the tropic seas !
Men ofttime of no common birth,
Men rich in histories untold,
That boasted not, though more than bold,
Blown from the four parts of the earth.
Men mighty-thew'd as Samson was,
A remnant of a race that's past,
Dark-brow'd as kings in iron cast,
Broad-breasted as twin gates of brass,—
Men strangely brave and fiercely true,
Who dared the West when giants were,
Who err'd, yet bravely dared to err ;
A remnant of that early few
Who held no crime or curse or vice
As dark as that of cowardice ;
With blendings of the worst and best
Of faults and virtues that have blest
Or cursed or thrill'd the human breast.

* * * * *

How wound we through the solid wood,
With all its broad boughs hung in green,
With lichen-mosses trail'd between !

How waked the spotted beasts of prey,
Deep sleeping from the face of day,
And dash'd them like a troubled flood
Down some defile and denser wood!

And snakes, long, lithe and beautiful
As green and graceful bough'd bamboo,
Did twist and twine them through and through
The boughs that hung red-fruited full.
One, monster-sized, above me hung,
Close eyed me with his bright pink eyes,
Then raised his folds, and sway'd and swung,
And lick'd like lightning his red tongue,
Then oped his wide mouth with surprise.
He writhed and curved, and raised and lower'd
His folds like liftings of the tide,
And sank so low, I touch'd his side,
As I rode by, with my broad sword.

The trees shook hands high overhead,
And bow'd and intertwined across
The narrow way, while leaves and moss

And luscious fruit, gold-hued and red,
Through the cool canopy of green,
Let not one sunshaft shoot between.

Birds hung and swung, green-robed and red,
Or droop'd in curved lines dreamily,
Rainbows reversed, from tree to tree,
Or sang low-hanging overhead—
Sang low, as if they sang and slept,
Sang faint, like some far waterfall,
And took no note of us at all,
Though ripe nuts crush'd at every step.

Wild lilies, tall as maidens are,
As sweet of breath, as pearly fair,
As fair as faith, as pure as truth,
Fell thick before our every tread,
As in a sacrifice to ruth,
And all the air with perfume fill'd
More sweet than ever man distill'd.
The ripen'd fruit a fragrance shed
And hung in hand-reach overhead,

In nest of blossoms on the shoot,
The bending shoot that bore the fruit.

How ran the monkeys through the leaves !
How rush'd they through, brown clad and blue,
Like shuttles hurried through and through
The threads a hasty weaver weaves !

How quick they cast us fruits of gold,
Then loosen'd hand and all foothold,
And hung limp, limber, as if dead,
Hung low and listless overhead ;
And all the time, with half-oped eyes
Bent full on us in mute surprise—
Look'd wisely too, as wise hens do
That watch you with the head askew.

The long days through from blossom'd trees
There came the sweet song of sweet bees,
With chorus-tones of cockatoo,
That slid his beak along the bough,

And walk'd and talk'd and hung and swung,
In crown of gold and coat of blue,
The wisest fool that ever sung,
Or had a crown, or held a tongue.

O when we broke the sombre wood
And pierced at last the sunny plain,
How wild and still with wonder stood
The proud mustangs with banner'd mane,
And necks that never knew a rein,
And nostrils lifted high, and blown,
Fierce breathing as a hurricane,
Yet by their leader held the while
In solid column, square, and file,
And ranks more martial than our own !

* * * * *

These things seem like some romance old,
By mad tale-monger made and told,
As I recount my reckless youth
In dry detail, dull word for word,
And deed for deed, as they occur'd,
With less embellishment than truth.

Far in the wildest quinine wood
We found a city old—so old,
Its very walls were turn'd to mould,
And stately trees upon them stood.
No history has mention'd it,
No map has given it a place ;
The last dim trace of tribe and race ;
The world's forgetfulness is fit.

It held one structure grand and moss'd,
Mighty as any castle sung,
And old when oldest Ind was young,
With threshold Christian never cross'd ;
A temple builded to the sun,
Along whose sombre altar stone
Brown bleeding virgins had been strown,
Like leaves, when leaves are crisp and dun,
In ages ere the Sphinx was born,
Or Babylon had birth or morn.

My chief led up the marble step—
He ever led, broad blade in hand—

When down the stones with double hand
Clutch'd to his blade, a savage leapt,
Hot bent to barter life for life.
The chief drove his broad bowie knife
Full through his thick and broad breast-bone,
And broke the point against the stone,
The dark stone of the temple wall.
I saw him loose his hold and fall
Full length with head hung down the step ;
I saw run down a ruddy flood
Of rushing pulsing human blood.
Then from the crowd a woman crept
And kiss'd the gory hands and face,
And smote herself. Then one by one
The dark crowd crept and did the same,
Then bore the dead man from the place.
Down the dark aisle the brown priests came,
So picture-like, with sandall'd feet
And long grey dismal grass-wove gowns,
So like the pictures of old time,
And stood all still and dark of frowns,
At blood upon the stone and street.

So we laid ready hand to sword
And boldly spoke some bitter word,
But they were stubborn, and so stood
Dark frowning as a winter wood,
And mutt'ring something of the crime
Of blood upon the temple stone,
As if the first that it had known.

As we turn'd to the massive door,
I traced the sharp edge of my sword
Along the marble wall and floor
For crack or crevice; there was none.
From one vast mount of marble stone
The mighty temple had been cored
By nut-brown children of the sun
When stars were newly bright and blithe
Of song along the rim of dawn,
A mighty marble monolith!

* * * * *

III.

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THROUGH marches through the mazy wood,
And may be through too much of blood,
At last we came down to the seas.
A city stood, white-wall'd, and brown
With age, in nest of orange trees,
And we won it, and many a town
And rancho reaching up and down,
Then rested in the red-hot days
Beneath the blossom'd orange trees,
Made drowsy with the drum of bees,
And drank in peace the south-sea breeze,
Made sweet with sweeping boughs of bays.

Well! there were maidens, shy at first,
And then, ere long, not over shy,
Yet pure of soul and proudly chare.
No love on earth has such an eye!
No land there is is bless'd or cursed
With such a limb or grace of face,

Or Grecian form, or gracious air !
In all the bleak north land not one
Hath been so warm of soul to me
As coldest soul by that warm sea,
Beneath the bright hot centred sun.

No lands where any ices are
Approach, or ever dare compare
With warm loves born beneath the sun.
The one the cold white steady star,
The lifted shifting sun the one.
I grant you fond, I grant you fair,
I grant you honour, trust and truth,
And years as beautiful as youth,
And many years, beyond the sun,
And faith as fix'd as any star ;
But all the north land hath not one
So warm of soul as sun-maids are.

I was but in my boyhood then,
I count my fingers over, so,
And find it years and years ago,
And I am scarcely yet of men.

But I was tall and lithe and fair,
With rippled tide of yellow hair,
And prone to mellowness of heart ;
While she was tawny-red like wine,
With black hair boundless as the night.
As for the rest I knew my part,
At least was apt, and willing quite
To learn, to listen, and incline
To teacher young and warm as mine.

O bright, bronzed maidens of the sun !
So fairer far to look upon
Than curtains of the Solomon,
Or Kedar's tents, or any one,
Or anything beneath the sun !
What follow'd then ? What has been done,
And said, and writ, and read, and sung ?
What will be writ and read again,
While love is life, and life remain ?—
While maids will heed, and men have tongue ?

What follow'd then ? But let that pass.
I hold one picture in my heart,

Hung curtain'd, and not any part
Of all its dark tint ever has
Been look'd upon by any one.
But if, may be, one brave and strong
As liftings of the bristled sea
Steps forth from out the days to be
And knocks heart-wise, and enters bold
A rugged heart inured to wrong,
As one would storm a strong stronghold,
Strong-footed, and most passing fair
Of truth, and thought beyond her years,
We two will lift the crape in tears,
Will turn the canvas to the sun,
Will trace the features one by one
Of my dear dead, in still despair.

Love well who will, love wise who can,
But love, be loved, for God is love ;
Love pure, like cherubim above ;
Love maids, and hate not any man.
Sit as sat we by orange tree,
Beneath the broad bough and grape-vine

Top-tangled in the tropic shine,
Close face to face, close to the sea,
And full of the red-centred sun,
With grand sea-songs upon the soul,
Roll'd melody on melody,
Like echoes of deep organ's roll,
And love, nor question any one.

If God is love, is love not God?
As high priests say, let prophets sing,
Without reproach or reckoning;
This much I say, knees knit to sod,
And low voice lifted, questioning.

Let eyes be not dark eyes, but dreams
And drifting clouds and flashing fires,
And far delights and fierce desires,
Yet not be more than well beseems;
Let hearts be pure and strong and true,
Let lips be luscious and blood-red,
Let earth in gold be garmented
And tented in her tent of blue,

Let goodly rivers slide between
Their leaning willow walls of green,
Let all things be fill'd of the sun,
And full of warm winds of the sea,
And I beneath my vine and tree
Take rest, nor war with any one;
Then I will thank God with full cause,
Say this is well, is as it was.

Let lips be red, for God has said
Love is like one gold-garmented,
And made them so for such a time.
Therefore let lips be red, therefore
Let love be ripe in ruddy prime,
Let hope beat high, let hearts be true,
And you be wise thereat, and you
Drink deep, and ask not any more.

Let red lips lift, proud curl'd, to kiss,
And round limbs lean and raise and reach
In love too passionate for speech,
Too full of blessedness and bliss

For anything but this and this ;
Let luscious lips lean hot to kiss
And swoon in love, while all the air
Is redolent with balm of trees,
And mellow with the song of bees,
While birds sit singing everywhere ;
And you will have not any more
Than I in boyhood, by that shore
Of olives, had in years of yore.

Let the unclean think things unclean ;
I swear tip-toed, with lifted hands,
That we were pure as sea-wash'd sands,
That not one coarse thought came between ;
Believe or disbelieve who will,
Unto the pure all things are pure ;
As for the rest, I can endure
Alike their good will or their ill.

She boasted Montezuma's blood,
Was pure of soul as Tahoe's flood,
And strangely fair and princely soul'd,

And she was rich in blood and gold—
More rich in love grown over-bold
From its own consciousness of strength.
How warm! O, not for any cause
Could I declare how warm she was,
In her brown beauty and hair's length.
We loved in the sufficient sun,
We lived in elements of fire,
For love is fire and fierce desire;
Yet lived as pure as priest and nun.

We lay slow rocking in the bay
In birch canoe beneath the crags
Thick, topp'd with palm, like sweeping flags
Between us and the burning day.
The red-eyed crocodile lay low
Or lifted from his rich rank fern,
And watch'd us and the tide by turn,
And we slow cradled to and fro.

And slow we cradled on till night,
And told the old tale, overtold,

As misers in recounting gold
Each time will take a new delight.
With her pure passion-given grace
She drew her warm self close to me ;
And, her two brown hands on my knee,
And her two black eyes in my face,
She then grew sad and guess'd at ill,
And in the future seem'd to see
With woman's ken of prophecy ;
Yet proffer'd her devotion still.
And plaintive so, she gave a sign,
A token cut of virgin gold,
That all her tribe should ever hold
Its wearer as some one divine,
Nor dare touch him with hostile hand.
And I in turn gave her a blade,
A dagger, worn as well by maid
As man, in that half lawless land.
It had a massive silver hilt,
And a most keen and cunning blade,
A gift by chief and comrades made
For blood at Rivas reckless spilt.

"Show this," said I; "too well 'tis known!
And worth an hundred lifted spears,
Should dark days fret your fair young years;
For there's not one in my brave band,
At single sight of this alone,
That will not reach a helping hand,
And make your right or wrong his own."

IV.

* * * * *
Love while 'tis day; night cometh soon,
Wherein no man or maiden may;
Love in the strong young prime of day;
Drink drunk with love in the red noon,
Red noon of love and life and sun;
Walk in love's light as in sunshine;
Drink in that sun as drinking wine;
Drink swift, nor question any one;
For loves change sure as man or moon,
And wane like warm full days of June.

O Love, so fair of promises,
Bend here thy brow, blow here thy kiss,

Bend here thy bow above the storm
But once, if only this once more.
Comes there no patient Christ to save,
Touch and re-animate thy form
Long three days dead and in the grave ?
Spread here thy silken net of jet ;
Since man is false, since maids forget,
Since man must fall for his sharp sin,
Be thou the pit that I fall in ;
I seek no safer fall than this.
Since man must die for some dark sin,
Blind leading blind, let come to this,
And my death-crime be one deep kiss.
Lo ! I have found another land,
May I not find another love,
True, trusting as a bosom'd dove,
To lay its whole heart in my hand ?
But lips that leap and cling and crush,
And limbs that twist and interwine
With passion as a passion-vine,
And veins that throb and swell and rush,
Be ye forbidden fruit and wine.

Such passion is not fair or fit
Or fashion'd tall—touch none of it.

* * * * *
* * * * *

Ill comes disguised in many forms ;
Fair winds are but a prophecy
Of foulest winds full soon to be ;
The brighter these, the blacker they ;
The clearest night has darkest day,
And brightest days bring blackest storms.
There came reverses to our arms ;
I saw the signal-light's alarms
At night red-crescenting the bay.
The foe pour'd down a flood next day
As strong as tides when tides are high,
And drove us bleeding in the sea,
In such wild haste of flight, that we
Had hardly time to arm and fly.

Blown from the shore, borne far a-sea,
I lifted my two hands on high
With wild soul plashing to the sky,

And cried, "O more than Italy,
Farewell at last to love and thee!"
I walk'd the deck, I kiss'd my hand
Back to the far and fading shore,
And bent a knee as to implore,
Until the last dark head of land
Slid down behind the lifting sea.
At last I sank in troubled sleep,
A very child, rock'd by the deep,
Sad questioning the fate of her
Before the savage conqueror.

The loss of comrades, power, place,
A city wall'd, cool shaded ways,
Cost me no care at all; somehow
I only saw her sad brown face,
And—I was younger then than now.

Red flash'd the sun across the deck,
Slow flapp'd the idle sails, and slow
The black ship cradled to and fro.
Afar my city lay, a speck
Of white against a line of blue;

Around, half lounging on the deck,
Some comrades chatted two by two.
I held a new-fill'd glass of wine,
And with the mate talk'd as in play
Of the events of yesterday,
To coax his light life into mine.

He jerk'd the wheel, as slow he said,
Low laughing with averted head,
And so, half sad, " You bet they'll fight ;
They follow'd in yok and canoe,
A perfect fleet, that on the blue
Lay dancing till the mid of night.
Would you believe ! one little cuss—"
(He turn'd his stout head slow sidewise,
And 'neath his hat-rim scann'd the skies)—
" In petticoats did follow us
The livelong night, and at the dawn
Her boat lay rocking in the lee,
Scarce one short pistol-shot from me."
This said the mate, half mournfully,
Then peck'd at us ; for he had drawn,

By bright light heart and homely wit,
A knot of us around the wheel,
Which he stood whirling like a reel,
For the still ship reck'd not of it.

“ And where's she now ? ” one careless said,
With eyes slow lifting to the brine,
Swift swept the instant far by mine ;
The bronzed mate listed, shook his head,
Spirted a stream of ambier wide
Across and over the ship side,
Jerk'd at the wheel, and slow replied :

“ She had a dagger in her hand,
She rose, she raised it, tried to stand,
But fell, and so upset herself ;
Yet still the poor brown savage elf,
Each time the long light wave would toss
And lift her form from out the sea,
Would shake a strange bright blade at me,
With rich hilt chased a cunning cross.
At last she sank, but still the same
She shook her dagger in the air,

As if to still defy and dare,
And sinking seem'd to call your name."

I dash'd my wine against the wall,
I rush'd across the deck, and all
The sea I swept and swept again,
With lifted hand, with eye and glass,
But all was idle and in vain.
I saw a red-bill'd sea-gull pass,
A petrel sweeping round and round,
I heard the far white sea-surf sound,
But no sign could I hear or see
Of one so more than seas to me.

I cursed the ship, the shore, the sea,
The brave brown mate, the bearded men ;
I had a fever then, and then
Ship, shore and sea were one to me ;
And weeks we on the dead waves lay,
And I more truly dead than they.
At last some rested on an isle,
The few strong-breasted with a smile,
Returning to the sunny shore ;

Scarce counting of the pain or cost,
Scarce recking if they won or lost,
They sought but action, ask'd no more;
They counted life but as a game,
With full per cent. against them, and
Staked all upon a single hand,
And lost or won, content the same.

I never saw my Chief again,
I never sought again the shore,
Or saw my white-wall'd city more.
I could not bear the more than pain
At sight of blossom'd orange trees
Or blended song of birds and bees,
The sweeping shadows of the palm,
Or spicy breath of bay and balm.
And striving to forget the while,
I wander'd through the dreary isle,
Here black with juniper, and there
Made white with goats in summer coats,
The only things that anywhere
We found with life in all the land,

Save birds that ran long-bill'd and brown,
Long-legg'd and still as shadows are,
Like dancing shadows, up and down
The sea-rim on the swelt'ring sand.

The warm sea laid his dimpled face,
With every white hair smoothed in place,
As if asleep against the land;
Great turtles slept upon his breast,
As thick as eggs in any nest;
I could have touched them with my hand.

* * * * *
* * * * *

I would some things were dead and hid,
Well dead and buried deep as hell,
With recollection dead as well,
And resurrection God-forbid.
They irk me with their weary spell
Of fascination, eye to eye,
And hot mesmeric serpent hiss,
Through all the dull eternal days.
Let them turn by, go on their ways,

Let them depart or let me die,
For life is but a beggar's lie,
And as for death, I grin at it ;
I do not care one whiff or whit
Whether it be or that or this.

I give my hand ; the world is wide ;
Then farewell memories of yore,
Between us let strife be no more ;
Turn as you choose to either side.
Say fare you well, shake hands and say—
Speak loud, and say with stately grace,
Hand clutching hand, face bent to face—
Farewell for ever and a day.

O passion-toss'd and bleeding past,
Part now, part well, part wide apart,
As ever ships on ocean slid ;
Down, down the sea, hull, sail, and mast ;
And in the album of my heart
Let hide the pictures of your face,

With other pictures in their place,
Slid over like a coffin's lid.

* * * *

The days and grass grow long together.
They now fell short and crisp again,
And all the fair face of the main
Grew dark and wrinkled at the weather.
Through all the summer sun's decline
Fell news of triumphs and defeats,
Of hard advances, hot retreats,
Then days and days and not a line.

At last one night they came. I knew
Ere yet the boat had touch'd the land,
That all was lost: they were so few
I near could count them on one hand;
But he the leader led no more.
The proud chief still disdain'd to fly,
But, like one wreck'd, clung to the shore,
And struggled on, and struggling fell

From power to a prison-cell,
And only left that cell to die.

* * * *

My recollection, like a ghost,
Goes from this sea to that sea-side,
Goes and returns as turns the tide,
Then turns again unto the coast.
I know not which I mourn the most,
My brother or my virgin bride,
My chief or my unwedded wife;
The one was as the lordly sun,
To joy in, bask in, and admire;
The peaceful moon was as the one,
To love, to look to, and desire,
And both a part of my young life.

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* * * *

Years after, shelter'd from the sun
Beneath a Sacramento bay,
A black Muchacho by me lay,

Along the long grass crisp and dun,
While his brown mule browsed by his side,
And told with all a Peon's pride
How he once fought, how long and well,
Broad breast to breast, red hand to hand,
Against a foe for his fair land,
And how the fierce invader fell ;
And artless told me how he died.

To die with hand and brow unbound
He gave his gems and jewell'd sword ;
Thus at the last the warrior found
Some freedom for his steel's reward.
He walk'd out from the prison-wall
Dress'd like a prince for a parade,
And made no note of man or maid,
But gazed out calmly over all ;
Then look'd afar, half paused, and then
Above the mottled sea of men
He kiss'd his thin hand to the sun ;
Then smiled so proudly none had known
But he was stepping to a throne,

Yet took no note of any one.
A nude brown beggar Peon child,
Encouraged as the captive smiled,
Look'd up, half scared, half pitying ;
He stoop'd, he caught it from the sands,
Put bright coins in its two brown hands,
Then strode on like another king.

Two deep, a musket's length, they stood,
A-front, in sandals, nude, and dun
As death and darkness wove in one,
Their thick lips thirsting for his blood.
He took their black hands one by one,
And, smiling with a patient grace,
Forgave them all and took his place.
He bared his broad brow to the sun,
Gave one long last look to the sky,
The white-wing'd clouds that hurried by,
The olive hills in orange hue ;
A last list to the cockatoo
That hung by beak from cocoa-bough
Hard by, and hung and sung as though

64 *WITH WALKER IN NICARAGUA.*

He never was to sing again,
Hung all red crown'd and robed in green,
With belts of gold and blue between.—

A bow, a touch of heart, a pall
Of purple smoke, a crash, a thud,
A warrior's raiment rent, and blood,
A face in dust and—that was all.





CALIFORNIAN.



*Glintings of day in the darkness,
Flashings of flint and of steel,
Blended in gossamer texture
The ideal and the real,
Limn'd like the phantom-ship shadow,
Crowding up under the keel.*



CALIFORNIAN.

I.



STAND beside the mobile sea ;
And sails are spread, and sails are furl'd
From farthest corners of the world,

And fold like white wings wearily.

Steam-ships go up, and some go down

In haste, like traders in a town,

And seem to see and beckon all.

Afar at sea some white shapes flee,

With arms stretch'd like a ghost's to me,

And cloud-like sails far blown and curl'd,

Then slide down to the under-world.

As if blown bare in winter blasts

Of leaf and limb, tall naked masts

Are rising from the restless sea,
So still and desolate and tall,
I seem to see them gleam and shine
With clinging drops of dripping brine.
Broad still brown wings slide here and there,
Thin sea-blue wings wheel everywhere,
And white wings whistle through the air.
I hear a thousand sea-gulls call.

Behold the Ocean on the beach
Kneel lowly down as if in prayer.
I hear a moan as of despair,
While far at sea do toss and reach
Some things so like white pleading hands.
The Ocean's thin and hoary hair
Is trail'd along the silver'd sands,
At every sigh and sounding moan.
'Tis not a place for mirthfulness,
But meditation deep, and prayer,
And kneelings on the salted sod,
Where man must own his littleness
And know the mightiness of God.

The very birds shriek in distress
And sound the ocean's monotone.

Dared I but say a prophecy,
As sang the holy men of old,
Of rock-built cities yet to be
Along these shining shores of gold,
Crowding athirst into the sea,
What wondrous marvels might be told !
Enough, to know that empire here
Shall burn her loftiest, brightest star ;
Here art and eloquence shall reign,
As o'er the wolf-rear'd realm of old ;
Here learn'd and famous from afar,
To pay their noble court, shall come,
And shall not seek or see in vain,
But look on all with wonder dumb.

Afar the bright Sierras lie
A swaying line of snowy white,
A fringe of heaven hung in sight,
Against the blue base of the sky.

I look along each gaping gorge,
I hear a thousand sounding strokes
Like giants rending giant oaks,
Or brawny Vulcan at his forge ;
I see pick-axes flash and shine
And great wheels whirling in a mine.
Here winds a thick and yellow thread,
A moss'd and silver stream instead ;
And trout that leap'd its rippled tide
Have turn'd upon their sides and died.

Lo ! when the last pick in the mine
Is rusting red with idleness,
And rot yon cabins in the mould,
And wheels no more croak in distress,
And tall pines re-assert command,
Sweet bards along this sunset shore
Their mellow melodies will pour,
Will charm as charmers very wise,
Will strike the harp with master hand,
Will sound unto the vaulted skies
The valour of these men of old—

The mighty men of 'Forty-nine—
Will sweetly sing and proudly say,
Long, long ago there was a day
When there were giants in the land.

II.

CURAMBO ! what a cloud of dust
Comes dashing down like driven gust !
And who rides rushing on the sight
Adown yon rocky long defile,
Swift as an eagle in his flight,
Fierce as a winter's storm at night
Blown from the bleak Sierra's height,
Careering down some yawning gorge ?
His face is flush'd, his eye is wild,
And 'neath his courser's sounding feet,
(A glance could barely be more fleet,)
The rocks are flashing like a forge.
Such reckless rider ! I do ween

No mortal man his like has seen.
And yet, but for his long serape
All flowing loose, and black as crape,
And long silk locks of blackest hair
All streaming wildly in the breeze,
You might believe him in a chair,
Or chatting at some country fair
With friend or señorita rare,
He rides so grandly at his ease.

But now he grasps a tighter rein,
A red rein wrought in golden chain,
And in his tapidaro stands,
Half turns and shakes two bloody hands,
And shouts defiance at his foe,
Now lifts his broad hat from his brow
As if to challenge fate, and now
His hand drops to his saddle-bow,
And clutches something gleaming there,
As if to something more than dare,
While halts the foe, that follow'd fast
As rushing wave or raving blast,

More sudden-swift than though were prest
All bridle-bands at one behest.

The stray winds lift the raven curls,
Soft as a fair Castilian girl's,
And press a brow so full and high
Its every feature does belie
The thought he is compell'd to fly;
A brow as open as the sky
On which you gaze and gaze again
As on a picture you have seen
And often sought to see in vain,
That seems to hold a tale of woe
Or wonder, that you fain would know;
A brow cut deep as with a knife,
With many a dubious deed in life;
A brow of blended pride and pain,
And yearnings for what should have been.

He grasps his gilded gory rein,
And wheeling like a hurricane,
Defying wood, or stone, or flood,

Is dashing down the gorge again.
O never yet has prouder steed
Borne master nobler in his need !
There is a glory in his eye
That seems to dare and to defy
Pursuit, or time, or space, or race.
His body is the type of speed,
While from his nostril to his heel
Are muscles as if made of steel.
He is not black, nor grey, nor white,
But 'neath that broad serape of night
And locks of darkness streaming o'er,
His sleek sides seem a fiery red ;
They may be red with gushing gore.

What crimes have made that red hand red?
What wrongs have written that young face
With lines of thought so out of place?
Where flies he? And from whence has fled?
And what his lineage and race?
What glitters in his heavy belt,
And from his furr'd catenas gleam?

What on his bosom that doth seem
A diamond bright or dagger's hilt?
The iron hoofs that still resound
Like thunder from the yielding ground
Alone reply; and now the plain,
Quick as you breathe and gaze again,
Is won, and all pursuit is vain.

III.

I STAND upon a stony rim,
Stone-paved and pattern'd as a street;
A rock-lipp'd cañon plunging south,
As if it were earth's open'd mouth,
Yawns deep and darkling at my feet;
So deep, so distant, and so dim
Its waters wind, a yellow thread,
And call so faintly and so far,
I turn aside my swooning head.
I feel a fierce impulse to leap
Adown the beetling precipice,
Like some lone, lost uncertain star;

To plunge into a place unknown,
And win a world all, all my own ;
Or if I might not meet that bliss,
At least escape the curse of this.

I gaze again. A gleaming star
Shines back as from some mossy well
Reflected from blue fields afar.
Brown hawks are wheeling here and there,
And up and down the broken wall
Cling clumps of dark green chaparral,
While from the rent rocks, grey and bare,
Blue junipers hang in the air.

Here, cedars sweep the stream, and here
Among the boulders moss'd and brown
That time and storms have toppled down
From towers undefiled by man,
Low cabins nestle as in fear,
And look no taller than a span.
From low and shapeless chimneys rise
Some tall straight columns of blue smoke,

And weld them to the bluer skies ;
While sounding down the sombre gorge
I hear the steady pick-axe stroke,
As if upon a flashing forge.

Another scene, another sound,
Sharp shots are fretting through the air,
Red knives are flashing everywhere,
And here and there the yellow flood
Is purpled with warm smoking blood.
The brown hawk swoops low to the ground,
And nimble chip-munks, small and still,
Dart striped lines across the sill
That lordly feet shall press no more.
The flume lies warping in the sun,
The pan sits empty by the door,
The pick-axe on its bed-rock floor
Lies rusting in the silent mine.
There comes no single sound or sign
Of life, beside yon munks in brown
That dart their dim shapes up and down
The rocks that swelter in the sun ;

But dashing round yon rocky spur
Where scarce a hawk would dare to whirr,
Fly horsemen reckless in their flight.
One wears a flowing black capote,
While down the cape doth flow and float
Long locks of hair as dark as night,
And hands are red that erst were white.

All up and down the land to-day
Black desolation and despair
It seems have sat and settled there,
With none to frighten them away.
Like sentries watching by the way
Black chimneys topple in the air,
And seem to say, Go back, beware ;
While up around the mountain's rim
Are clouds of smoke, so still and grim
They look as they are fasten'd there.

A lonely stillness, so like death,
So touches, terrifies all things,
That even rooks that fly o'erhead

Are hush'd, and seem to hold their breath,
To fly with muffled wings,
And heavy as if made of lead.
Some skulls that crumble to the touch,
Some joints of thin and chalk-like bone,
A tall black chimney, all alone,
That leans as if upon a crutch,
Alone are left to mark or tell,
Instead of cross or cryptic stone,
Where fair maids loved or brave men fell.

* * * * *

I look along the valley's edge,
Where swings the white road like a swell
Of surf along a sea of hedge
And black and brittle chaparral,
And enters like an iron wedge
Drove in the mountain dun and brown,
As if to split the hills in twain.
Two clouds of dust roll o'er the plain,
And men ride up and men ride down,
And hot men halt, and curse and shout,
And coming coursers plunge and neigh.

The clouds of dust are roll'd in one,
And horses, horsemen, where are they?
Lo! through a rift of dust and dun,
Of desolation and of rout,
I see some long white daggers flash,
I hear the sharp hot pistols crash,
And curses loud in mad despair
Are blended with a plaintive prayer,
That struggles through the dust and air.

The cloud is lifting like a veil;
The frantic curse, the plaintive wail
Have died away; nor sound nor word
Along the dusty plain is heard
Save sounding of yon courser's feet,
That flies so fearfully and fleet,
With gory girth and broken rein,
Across the hot and trackless plain.
Behold him, as he trembling flies,
Look back with red and bursting eyes
To where his gory master lies.
The cloud is lifting like a veil,

But underneath its drifting sail
I see a loose and black capote,
In careless heed far fly and float,
So vulture-like above a steed
Of perfect mould and passing speed.

Here lies a man of giant mould,
His mighty right arm, perfect bare,
Save but its sable coat of hair,
Is clutching in its iron clasp
A clump of sage, as if to hold
The earth from slipping from his grasp ;
While, stealing from his brow, a stain
Of purple blood and gory brain
Yields to the parch'd lips of the plain,
Swift to resolve to dust again.

Here lies a youth, whose fair face is
Still holy from a mother's kiss,
With brow as white as alabaster,
Save a tell-tale powder-stain
Of a deed and a disaster
That will never come again,

With their perils and their pain ;
While friend and foe blend here and there
With dusty lips and trailing hair ;
Some with a cold and sullen stare,
Some with their red hands bent in prayer.

The tinkle of bells on the bended hills,
The hum of bees in the orange trees,
And the lowly call of the beaded rills
Are heard in the land as I look again
Over the peaceful battle-plain.
Murderous man from the field has fled,
Fled in fear from the face of his dead.
He bled—he battled—he ruled a day,
And peaceful nature resumes her sway ;
And the sward where yonder corses lie,
When the verdant season shall come again,
Shall greener grow than it grew before,
Shall in its sun-clime glory vie
With the gayest green in the tropic scene,
Taking its freshness back once more
From them that despoil'd it yesterday.

IV.

THE sun is red and flush'd and dry,
And fretted from his weary beat
Across the hot and desert sky,
And swollen as from overheat,
And failing too, for see, he sinks
Swift as a ball of burnish'd ore :
It may be fancy, but methinks
He never fell so fast before.

I hear the neighing of hot steeds,
I see the marshalling of men
That silent move among the trees
As busily as swarming bees
With step and stealthiness profound,
On carpetings of spindled weeds,
Without a syllable, or sound,
Save clashing of their burnish'd arms,
Clinking their dull death-like alarms :
Grim bearded men and brawny men
That grope among the ghostly trees.
Were ever silent men as these ?

Was ever sombre forest deep
And dark as this? Here one might sleep
While all the weary years went round,
Nor wake nor weep for sun or sound.

A stone's-throw to the right, a rock
Has rear'd his head among the stars,
An island in the upper deep,
And on his front a thousand scars
Of thunder's crash and earthquake's shock
Are seam'd, as if by sabre's sweep
Of gods, enraged that he should rear
His front amid their realms of air.

What moves along his beetling brow,
So small, so indistinct and far,
This side yon blazing evening star,
Seen through that redwood's shifting bough?
A lookout on the world below?
A watcher for the friend—or foe?
This still troop's sentry it must be,
Yet seems no taller than my knee.

But for the grandeur of this gloom,
And for the chafing steeds' alarms,
And brown men's sullen clash of arms,
This were but as a living tomb.
These weeds are spindled, pale and white,
As if nor sunshine, life nor light
Had ever reach'd this forest's heart.
Above, the redwood boughs entwine
Thick as a copse of tangled vine ;
Above, so fearfully afar,
It seems as 'twere a lesser sky—
A sky without a moon or star
The moss'd boughs are so thick and high ;
At every lisp of leaf I start !
Would I could hear a cricket trill,
Or that yon sentry from his hill
Might shout or show some sign of life,
The place does seem so deathly still.
"Mount ye, and forward for the strife!"
Who by yon dark trunk sullen stands,
With black cloak clasp'd in his thin hands,
And coldly gives his brief commands ?

They mount; away! Quick on his heel
He turns, and grasps his gleaming steel,
Then sadly smiles, and stoops to kiss
An upturn'd face so sweetly fair—
So sadly, saintly, purely fair,
So rich of blessedness and bliss.
I know she is not flesh and blood,
But some sweet spirit of this wood;
I know, it by her wealth of hair,
And step on the unyielding air;
Her seamless robe of shining white,
Her soul-deep eyes of darkest night;
But over all and more than all
That could be said or can befall,
That tongue can tell or pen can trace,
That wondrous witchery of face.

Among the trees I see him stride
To where a red steed fretting stands,
Impatient for his lord's commands;
And she glides noiseless at his side.

Lo ! not a bud, or leaf, or stem,
The way she went, is broke or bent ;
They only nodded as she stepp'd,
And all their grace and freshness kept,
And now will in their beauty bloom
As though fresh risen from a tomb,
For fairest sun has shone on them.

“ The world is mantling black again !
Beneath us, o'er the sleeping plain,
Dull steel-grey clouds slide up and down
As if the still earth wore a frown.
The west is red with sunlight slain ! ”

(One hand toys with her waving hair,
Soft lifting from her shoulders bare ;
The other holds the loosen'd rein,
And rests upon the swelling mane
That curls the curved neck o'er and o'er,
Like waves that swirl along the shore.

He hears the last retreating sound
Of iron on volcanic stone,
That echoes far from peak to plain,
And 'neath the thick wood's darken'd zone
He peers the dark Sierras down.)
“ But darker yet shall be the frown,
And redder yet shall be the flame ;
And yet I would that this were not—
That all, forgiven or forgot
Of curses deep and awful crimes,
Of blood and terror, could but seem
Some troubled and unholy dream ;
That even now I could awake,
And waking find me once again,
With hand and heart without a stain,
Swift gliding o'er that sunny lake,
Begirt with town and castle-wall,
Where first I saw the silver light—
Begirt with blossoms, and the bloom
Of orange, sweet with the perfume
Of cactus, pomegranate, and all
The thousand sweets of tropic climes ;

And waking, see the mellow moon
Pour'd out in gorgeous plenilune
On silver ripples of that tide ;
And waking, hear soft music pour
Along that flora-formèd shore ;
And waking, find you at my side,
My father's moss'd and massive halls,
My brothers in their strength and pride."

(His hand forsakes her raven hair,
His eyes have an unearthly glare :
She shrinks and shudders at his side,
Then lifts to his her moisten'd eye,
And only looks her sad reply.
A sullenness his soul enthrals,
A silence born of hate and pride.
His fierce volcanic heart so deep
Is stirr'd, his teeth, despite his will,
Do chatter as if in a chill ;
His very dagger at his side
Does shake and rattle in its sheath,
As blades of brown grass in a gale

Do rustle on the frosted heath,
And yet he does not bend or weep.)

“ I did not vow a girlish vow,
Nor idle imprecation now
Will I bestow by boasting word.
Feats of the tongue become the knave.
A wailing in the land is heard
For those that will not come again ;
And weeping for the rashly brave,
Who sleep in many a gulch and glen,
Has wet a hundred hearths with tears,
And darken'd them for years and years.
Would I could turn their tears to gore,
Make every hearth as cold as one
Is now upon that sweet lake shore,
Where my dear kindred dwelt of yore ;
Where now is but an ashen heap,
And mass of mossy earth and stone ;
Where round the altar black wolves keep
Their carnival and doleful moan ;
Where hornèd lizards dart and climb,
And mollusks slide and leave their slime.

“ But tremble not. This night alone
Shall see my vengeance fully done ;
And ere the day-star gleams again
My horse’s hoofs shall spurn the dead—
The still warm reeking dead of those
Who brought us all our bitter woes.
While all my glad returning way
Shall be as light as living day,
From ranchos, campos, burning red.
And then ! And then, my peri pearl ”—
(As if to charm her from her fears
And drive away the starting tears,
Again his small hand seeks a curl,
And voice forgets its sullen ire,
And eye forsakes its flashing fire)—
“ Away to where the orange tree
Is white through all the cycled years,
And love lives an eternity ;
Where birds are never out of tune
And life knows no decline of noon ;
Where climes are sweet as woman’s breath,
And purpled, dreamy, mellow skies
Are lovely as a woman’s eyes :

There, we in calm and perfect bliss
Of boundless faith and sweet delight
Shall realize the world above,
Forgetting all the wrongs of this ;
Forgetting all of blood and death,
And all your terrors of to-night,
In pure devotion and deep love."

As gently as a mother bows
Her first-born sleeping babe above,
The cherish'd cherub lips to kiss,
In her full blessedness and bliss,
He bends to her with stately air,
His proud head in its cloud of hair:
I do not heed the hallow'd kiss ;
I do not hear the hurried vows
Of passion, faith, unfailing love ;
I do not mark the prison'd sigh,
I do not meet the moisten'd eye :
A low, sweet melody is heard
Like cooing of some Orient bird ;
So fine it does not touch the air,

So faint it stirs not anywhere ;
Faint as the falling of the dew ;
Low as a pure unutter'd prayer ;
The meeting, mingling, as it were,
Of souls in Paradisial bliss.

Erect, again he grasps the rein
So tight, as to the seat he springs,
I see his red steed plunge and poise
And beat the air with iron feet,
And curve his noble glossy neck,
And toss on high his swelling mane,
And leap—away ! he spurns the rein,
And flies so fearfully and fleet,
But for the hot hoofs' ringing noise
'Twould seem as if he were on wings.

And she is gone ! Gone like a breath,—
Gone like a white sail seen at night,
A moment and then lost to sight ;
Gone like a star you look upon,

That glimmers to a bead, a speck,
Then softly melts into the dawn,
And all is still and dark as death.

V.

* * * *

I LOOK far down a dewy vale
Where cool palms lean along a brook
As crooked as a shepherd's crook.
Red parrots call from orange trees,
Where white lips kiss the idle breeze,
And murmur with the hum of bees :
The grey dove coos his low love-tale.

With cross outstretch'd like pleading hands
That mutely plead the faith of Christ,
Amid the palms a low church stands :
I would that man might learn from these
The priceless victories of Peace ;
And woo her 'mid these olive trees,
And win an earthly paradise.

I see black clouds of troops afar
Sweep like a surge that sweeps the shore,
And check'ring all the green hills o'er
Are battlements and signs of war.

I hear the hoarse-voiced cannon roar ;
The red-mouth'd orators of war
Plead as they never pled before ;
While outdone thunder stops his car
And leans in wonderment afar.

A fragment from the struggle rent
Forsakes the rugged battlement,
And winds it painfully and slow
Amid the cool and peaceful palms
To where a grey church open stands,
As if it bore a load of woe.

Curambo ! 'tis a chief they bear !
And by his black and flowing hair
Methinks I have seen him before.
A black priest guides them through the door :
They lay him bleeding on the floor.

He moves, he lifts his feeble hand,
And points with tried and trenched brand,
And bids them to the battle-plain.
They turn—they pause; he bids again;
They turn a last time to their chief,
And gaze in silence and deep pain,
For silence speaks the deepest grief.
They clutch their blades; they turn—are gone:
And priest and chief are left alone.

“ So here my last day has its close,
And here it ends. Here all is not.
I am content. 'Tis what I sought;
Revenge, and then my last repose.
O for the rest! for the rest eternal!
O for the deep and the dreamless sleep!
Where never a hope lures to deceive;
Where never a heart beats but to grieve;
Nor thoughts of heaven or hells infernal
Shall even wake or dare to break
The rest of an everlasting sleep!

“ Is there truth in the life eternal ?
Will our memories never die ?
Shall we live in the realms supernal
Life's resplendent and glorious lie ?
Death has not one shape so frightful
But defiantly I would brave it ;
Earth has nothing so delightful
But my soul would scorn to crave it,
Could I know for sure, for certain,
That the falling of the curtain,
And the folding of the hands
Is the full and the final casting
Of accounts for the everlasting !
Everlasting, and everlasting !

“ Well ! I have known, I know not why,
Through all my dubious days of strife,
That when we live our deeds we die ;
That man may in one hour live
All that his life can bear or give.
This I have done, and do not grieve
For I am older by a score

Than many born long long before,
If sorrows be the sum of life.

“ Ay! I am old—old as the years
Could brand me with their blood and tears,
For with my fingers I can trace
Grief’s trenches on my hollow face;
And through my thin frame I can feel
The pulses of my frozen heart
Beat with a dull uncertain start;
And, mirror’d in my sword, to-day,
Before its edge of gleaming steel
Had lost its lustre in the fray,
I saw around my temples stray
Thin straggling locks of steely grey.

“ Fly, fly you, to yon snowy height,
And tell to her I fail, I die.
Fly swiftly, priest, I bid you!—fly
Before the falling of the night!
What! know her not, O priest unfair,
Nor how, nor where she may be found?

Then lend your dull ear to the ground,
And hear you who she is, and where.

“ She is the last, last of her kind,
Last of a race of gods and kings,
Last of the Montezumas' line
That dwelt up in the yellow sun,
And, sorrowing for man's despair,
Slid by his trailing yellow hair
To earth, to rule with love and bring
The blessedness of peace to man.
She is the last, last earthly one
Of the brown children of the sun ;
A sweet perfume still lingering
In essence pure, and living on
In blessedness about the spot
When rose, and bush, and bloom are not.

“ Beside Tezcucó's flowery shore,
Where waves were washing evermore
The massive columns of its wall,
Stood Montezuma's mighty hall.

And here the Montezumas reign'd
In perfect peace and love unfeign'd,
Until, from underneath the sea
Where all sin is, or ought to be,
Came men of death and strange device,
Who taught a strange and mystic faith
Of crucifixion and of Christ,
More hated than the plague or death.

“ Nay, do not swing your cross o'er me ;
You cross'd you once, but do not twice,
Nor dare repeat the name of Christ ;
Nor start, nor think to fly, nor frown,
While you the stole and surplice wear ;
For I do clutch your sable gown,
And you shall hear my curse, or prayer,
And be my priest in my despair ;
Since neither priest, nor sign, nor shrine
Is left in all the land, of mine.

“ Enough ! We know, alas ! too well
How red Christ ruled—Tonatiu fell.

The black wolf in our ancient halls
Unfrighten'd sleeps the live-long day.
The stout roots burst the mossy walls,
And in the moonlight wild dogs play
Around the plazas overgrown,
Where nude boars hold their carnivals.
The moss is on our altar stone,
The mould on Montezuma's throne,
And symbols in the desert strown.

“ And when your persecutions ceased,
From troop, and king, and cowed priest,
That we had felt for centuries—
(Ah, know you, priest, that cross of thine
Is but death's symbol, and the sign
Of blood and butchery and tears ?)—
And when return'd the faithful few,
Beside Tezcucó's sacred shore,
To build their broken shrines anew,
They number'd scarce a broken score.
Here dwelt my father—here *she* dwelt;
Here kept one altar burning bright,

Last of the thousands that had shone
Along the mountain's brows of stone,
Last of a thousand stars of night.
To Tonatiu Ytzaqual we bow'd ;
Nay, do not start, nor shape the sign
Of horror at this creed of mine,
Nor call again the name of Christ.
You cross you once, you cross you twice—
I warn you do not cross you thrice.
Nor will I brook a sign or look
Of anger at her faith avow'd.
I am no creedist. Faith to me
Is but a name for mystery.
I only know this faith is her's ;
I care to know no more, to be
The truest of its worshippers.

“ The Yankee came across the plain,
With gory blade and brand of flame ;
I know not that he knew or cared
What was our race, or creed, or name ;
I only know the Pahoo dared

Assault and sack for sake of gain
Of sacred vessels wrought in gold,
The temple where gods dwelt of old;
And that my father, brothers, dared
Defend their shrines, and all were slain.

“ ‘Fly with the maid,’ my father cried,
When first the fierce assault was made—
‘A boat chafes at the causeway side,’
And in the instant was obey’d.
We gain’d the boat, sprang in, away
We dash’d along the dimpled tide.

“It must have been they thought we bore
The treasure in our flight and haste,
For in an instant from the shore
An hundred crafts were making chase,
And as their sharp prows drew apace
I caught a carbine to my face.
She rising, dash’d it quick aside;
And when their hands were stretch’d to clasp
The boat’s prow in their eager grasp,

She turn'd to me and sudden cried,
'Come, come,' and plunged into the tide.
I plunged into the dimpled wave;
I had no thought but 'twas my grave;
But faith had never follower
More true than I to follow her.

“On through the purple wave she cleaves,
As darts a sunbeam through the leaves.
At last—what miracle was there!—
Again we breathed the welcome air,
And resting by the rising tide,
The secret outlet of the lake,
Safe hid by trackless fern and brake,
With yellow lilies at her side,
She told me how in ages gone
Her fathers built with sacred stone
This secret way beneath the tide,
That now was known to her alone.

“When night came on and all was still,
And stole the white moon down the hill,

Soft, as if she too fear'd some ill,
 Again I sought the sacred halls
 And on the curving causeway stood.
 I look'd—naught but the blacken'd walls
 And charr'd bones of my kindred blood
 Was left beside the dimpled flood.

* * * * *

“ Enough ! Mine was no temper'd steel
 To-day upon the stormy field,
 As many trench'd heads yonder feel,
 And many felt, that feel no more,
 That fought beneath your cross and sign,
 And falling, vainly call'd on Christ—
 You cursed monk ! dare you cross you thrice,
 When I have warn'd you twice before ?
 To you and your damn'd faith I owe
 My heritage of crime and woe ;
 You shall not live to mock me more
 If there be temper in this brand,
 Or nerve left in this bloody hand.

I start, I leave the stony ground,
Despite of blood or mortal wound,
Or darkness that has dimm'd the eye,
Or senses that do dance and reel—
I clutch a throat—I clench a steel—
I thrust—I fail—I fall—I die . . .”

v.

SHE stands upon the wild watch tower
And with her own hand feeds the flame,—
The beacon-light to guide again
His coming from the battle-plain.
'Tis wearing past the midnight hour,
The latest that he ever came,
Yet silence reigns around the tower.

'Tis hours past the midnight hour,
She calls, she looks, she lists in vain
For sight or sound from peak or plain.
She moves along the beetling tower,

She leans, she lists forlorn and lone,
She stoops her ear low to the ground,
In hope to catch the welcome sound
Of iron on the rugged stone.

In vain she peers down in the night
But for one feeble flash of light
From flinty stone and feet of steel.
She stands upon the fearful rim,
Where even coolest head would reel,
And fearless leans her form far o'er
Its edge, and lifts her hands to him,
And calls in words as sweetly wild,
As bleeding saint or sorrowing child ;
She looks, she lists, she leans in vain.
In vain his dalliance does deplore ;
She turns her to the light again,
And bids the watchman to the plain,
Defying night or dubious way,
To guide the flight or join the fray.

The day-star dances on the snow

That gleams along Sierra's crown,
In gorgeous everlasting glow
And frozen glory and renown.
Yet still she feeds the beacon flame,
And lists, and looks, and leans in vain.

The day has dawn'd. She still is there !
Yet in her sad and silent air
I read the stillness of despair.
Why burns the red light on the tower
So brightly at this useless hour ?
But see ! The day-king hurls a dart
At darkness, and his cold black heart
Is pierced, and now, compell'd to flee,
Flies bleeding to the farther sea.
And now, behold, she radiant stands,
And lifts her thin white jewell'd hands
Unto the broad, unfolding sun,
And hails him Tonatiu and King,
With hallow'd mien and holy prayer.
Her fingers o'er some symbols run,
Her knees are bow'd in worshipping

Her God, beheld when thine is not,
In form of faith long, long forgot.

Again she lifts her white arms bare,
Far flashing in their bands of gold
And precious stones, rare, rich, and old.
Was ever mortal half so fair ?
Was ever such a wealth of hair ?
Was ever such a plaintive air ?
Was ever such a sweet despair ?

Still humbler now her form she bends.
Still higher now the flame ascends.
She bares her bosom to the sun.
Again her jewell'd fingers run
In signs and sacred form and prayer.
She bows with awe and holy air
In lowly worship to the sun,
Then rising, calls her lover's name,
And leaps into the leaping flame.

I do not hear the faintest moan,

Or sound, or syllable, or tone.
The red flames stoop a moment down,
As if to raise her from the ground ;
They whirl, they swirl, they sweep around
With light'ning feet and fiery crown,
Then stand up, tall, tip-toed, as one
Would hand a soul up to the sun.





THE LAST TASCHASTAS.



*The hills were brown, the heavens were blue,
A woodpecker pounded a pine-top shell,
While a partridge whistled the whole day through,
For a rabbit to dance in the chaparral,
And a grey grouse drumm'd " All is well, all is well."*



THE LAST TASCHASTAS.

PART FIRST.

WRINKLED and brown as a bag of
leather,
A squaw sits moaning long and low ;
Yesterday she was a wife and mother,
To-day she is rocking her to and fro,
A childless widow, in weeds and woe.

An Indian sits in a rocky cavern,
Whetting a flint in an arrow head ;
His children are moving as still as shadows,
His squaw is moulding some balls of lead,
With her round face painted the battle red.

114 *THE LAST TASCHASTAS.*

An Indian sits in a black-jack jungle,
Where a grizzly bear has rear'd her young,
Whetting a flint on a granite boulder,
And his quiver is over his brown back hung,
And his face is streak'd and his bow is strung.

An Indian hangs from a cliff of granite,
Like an eagle's nest built in the air,
Looking away to the east, and watching
The smoke of the cabins curling there,
And eagles' feathers are in his hair.

In belt of wampum, in battle fashion,
An Indian watches with a wild desire,
He is red with paint, he is black with passion,
And grand as a god in his savage ire,
As he leans and listens till the stars are a-fire.

Sombre and sullen and sad, a chieftain
From a fierce rock looks far to the sea,
Just before him beat in the white billows,
Just behind him the toppled tall tree
Shows white woodmen, knee buckled to knee.

Long he looks and he leans and listens—
Waves before him, behind him white waves
Beating and breaking on the last Taschastas ;
Waves that have toppled across his braves,
Levell'd, and left not a sign of their graves.

“Awake and arise ! O, remnant Taschastas !
O would you but waken a war in the land,
I would double this hand in the dust contented”—
He lifts to heaven his doubled right hand,
Flashing afar with a great gold band.

* * * * *

All together in gravest council,
Down in a cañon wall'd so high
That no thing could ever reach them
Save some stars dropp'd from the sky,
And the brown bats sweeping by ;

And some were grey and thin and wiry,
And wise as brief, and brief as bold,
And some were young and fierce and fiery,
And some were stately and tall, and told
Their counsellings like kings of old.

Flamed the council-fire brighter,
Flash'd black eyes like diamond beads,
When a woman told her sorrows,
While a warrior told his deeds,
And a widow tore her weeds.

Then was lit the pipe of council,
That their fathers smoked of old,
With its stem of manzinnetta,
And its bowl of quartz and gold,
And traditions manifold.

Lo! from lip to lip in silence
Burn'd it round the circle red,
Like an evil star slow passing
(Sign of battles and blood-shed)
Round the heavens overhead.

Then the silence deep was broken
By the thunder rolling far,
As gods muttering in anger,
Or the rumbling battle-car—
Red-mouthed orator of war.

THE LAST TASHASTAS. 117

" 'Tis the spirits of my fathers
Mutt'ring vengeance in the skies,
And the flashing of the lightning
Is the anger of their eyes,
Bidding us in battle rise,"

Cried the war-chief now uprising,
Naked all above the waist,
While a belt of shells and silver
Held his tamooos to its place,
And the war-paint streak'd his face.

Women melted from the council,
Boys crept backward out of sight,
Till alone a wall of warriors
In their paint and battle-plight
Sat reflecting back the light.

" O my fathers in the storm-cloud"—
(His red arms tossing to the skies,
While the massive walls of granite
Seem'd to shrink to half their size,
And to mutter strange replies)—

“Soon we come, O angry fathers,
Down the darkness you have cross’d;
Speak for hunting-grounds there for us;
Those you left us we have lost—
Gone like blossoms in a frost.

“Warriors!” (and his arms fell folded
On his tawny swelling breast,
While his voice now low and plaintive
As the waves in their unrest
A touch of tenderness confess’d,)

“Where is Wrotto, wise of counsel,
But yesterday here in his place?
A brave lies dead down in the valley,
Last brave of his line and race,
And a ghost sits on his face.

“Where the boy the tender-hearted,
With his mother yestermorn?
Lo! a wigwam-door is darken’d,
And a mother mourns forlorn,
With her long locks toss’d and torn.

“ Once like pines around a mountain
Did my braves in council stand,
Now I call you loud like thunder,
And you come at my command,
Faint and few with feeble hand.

“ Lo ! our daughters have been gather'd
From among us by the foe,
Like the lilies they once gather'd
In the spring-time all aglow
From the banks of living snow.

“ Through the land where we for ages
Laid the bravest, dearest dead,
Grinds the savage white-man's ploughshare,
Grinding sires' bones for bread ;
We shall give them blood instead.

“ I saw the white skulls in a furrow,
And around the curs'd share
Clung the flesh of my own children ;
And my mother's tangled hair
Trail'd along the furrow there.

“ O my mother up in cloud-land ! ”

(His long arms lifting like the spray,)

“ Whet the flint heads in my arrows,

Make my heart as hard as they,

Nerve me like a bear at bay.

“ Warriors ! braves ! I cry for vengeance,

And the dim ghosts of the dead

Unavenged do wail and shiver

In the storm-cloud overhead,

And shoot arrows battle-red.”

Then he ceased, and sat among them,

With his long locks backward strown ;

They as mute as men of marble,

He a king upon a throne,

And as still as polish'd stone.

Hard by stood the war-chief's Daughter,

Taller than the tassel'd corn,

Sweeter than the kiss of morning,

Sad as some sweet star of morn,

Half defiant, half forlorn.

Robed in skins of striped panther
Lifting loosely to the air,
With a face a shade of sorrow,
And dark eyes that said beware,
Nestled in a storm of hair ;

With her striped robes around her,
Fasten'd by an eagle's beak,
Stood she by the stately chieftain,
And her rich lips touch'd his cheek,
As she ventured thus to speak :

“ Must the tomahawk of battle
Be unburied where it lies,
O, last war-chief of Taschastas ?
Must the smoke of battle rise,
Like a storm-cloud in the skies ?

“ True, some wretch has laid a brother
With his swift feet to the sun,
But because one bough is broken,
Must the broad oak be undone ?
All the red-wood fell'd as one ?

“ True, the braves have faded, wasted
Like ripe blossoms in the rain,
But when we have spent the arrows,
Do we twang the string in vain,
And then snap the bow in twain ?”

Like a vessel in a tempest
Shook the warrior, wild and grim,
As he gazed out in the midnight,
As to things that beckon'd him,
And his eyes were moist and dim.

Then unto his mighty bosom,
Massive as a gate of brass,
Tenderly the warrior press'd her,
As if she were made of glass,
Low murmuring, “ Alas ! alas !

“ Lona Ellah ! Spotted Lily !
Streaks of blood shall be the sign,
On their cursed and mystic pages,
Representing me and mine !
By Tonnatiu's fiery shrine !

“ And when the grass shall grow untrodden
In my war-path, and the plough
Shall be grinding through this cañon,
Where my braves are gather’d now,
Still shall they record this vow.

“ War and vengeance ! rise, my warriors,
Rise and shout the battle-sign,
Ye who love revenge and glory !
Ye for peace, in silence, pine,
And no more be braves of mine.”

Then the war-yell roll’d and echo’d
As they started from the ground,
Till an eagle from his cedar
Started from his slumber sound,
And flew circling round and round.

“ Enough, enough, my kingly father ;”
And the glory of her eyes
Flash’d the valour and the passion
That may sleep but never dies,
As she proudly thus replies :

“Shall the red-wood be a willow,
 Pliant and as little worth ?
 It shall stand the king of forests,
 Or its fall shall shake the earth,
 Desolating heart and hearth !”

* * * *
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PART SECOND.

* * * *
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THE fierce red-men had follow'd the sun
 From cold east shore to warm west sea,
 And, faint and failing fast as he,
 Felt, sure as his, their red race run.
 This ancient tribe press'd to the wave,
 There fain had slept a patient slave,
 And died out as red embers die
 From flames that once leapt hot and high,
 But, roused to anger, half arose
 Around that chief, a sudden flood,

At his hot hungry cry for blood ;
Half drowsy shook a feeble hand,
Then sank back in a tame repose,
And left him to his fate and foes,
A stately wreck upon the strand.

His was no common mould of mind,
But made for action, ill or good.
Cast in another land and scene,
His restless, reckless will had been
A curse or blessing to his kind.
His eye was like the lightning's wing,
His voice was like a rushing flood,
He boasted Montezuma's blood,
And when a captive bound he stood,
His presence look'd the perfect king.

'Twas held at first that he should die ;
I never knew the reason why
A milder counsel did prevail,
Save that we shrank from blood, and save
That brave men do respect the brave.

Down sea sometimes there was a sail,
And far at sea, they said, an isle,
And he was sentenced to exile,
In open boat upon the sea,
To go the instant on the main,
And never under penalty
Of death, to touch the shore again.
A troop of bearded bucksinn'd men
Bore him hard-hurried to the wave,
Placed him swift in the boat; and when
Swift pushing to the bristled sea,
His daughter rush'd down suddenly,
Threw him his bow, leapt from the shore
Into the boat beside the brave,
And sat her down and seized the oar,
And never question'd, made replies,
Or moved her lips, or raised her eyes.

His breast was like a gate of brass,
His brow was like a gather'd storm;
There is no chisell'd stone that has
So stately and complete a form,

THE LAST TASCHASTAS. 127

In sinew, arm, and every part,
In all the galleries of art.

Grey, bronzed, and naked to the waist,
He stood half halting in the prow,
With quiver bare and idle bow.
His daughter sat with her sad face
Bent on the wave, with her two hands
Held tightly to the dripping oar,
And as she sat her dimpled knee
Bent lithe as wand of willow tree,
So round and full, so rich and free,
That no one would have ever known
That it had either joint or bone.
The warm sea fondled with the shore,
And laid his white face on the sands.

Her eyes were black, her face was brown,
Her breasts were bare, and there fell down
Such wealth of hair, it almost hid
The two in its rich jetty fold,

Which I had sometime fain forbid—
They were so richer, fuller far
Than any polish'd bronzes are,
And richer hued than any gold.
On her brown arms and her brown hands
Were hoops of gold and golden bands,
Rough hammer'd from the virgin ore,
So heavy, they could hold no more.

I wonder now, I wonder'd then,
That men who fear'd not gods or men
Laid no rude hand at all on her.
I think she had a dagger slid
Down in her silver'd wampum belt ;
It might have been, instead of hilt,
A flashing diamond hurry-hid,
That I beheld—I could not know
For certain, we did hasten so ;
And I know now less sure than then.
Deeds strangle memories of deeds,
Red blossoms wither, choked with weeds,
And floods drown memories of men.

Some things have happen'd since, and then
This happen'd years and years ago.

“ Go, go,” the captain cried, and smote
With sword and boot the swaying boat,
Until it quiver'd as at sea,
And brought the old man to his knee ;
He turn'd his face, and turning rose
With hand raised fiercely to his foes :
“ Yes, we will go ; last of my race,
Push'd by the robbers ruthlessly
Into the hollows of the sea,
From this the last, last resting-place.
Traditions of my fathers say
A feeble few reach'd for the land,
And we reach'd them a welcome hand,
Of old, upon another shore ;
Now they are strong, we weak as they,
And they have driven us before
Their faces, from that sea to this ;
Then marvel not if we have sped

Sometime an arrow as we fled,
So keener than a serpent's kiss."

He turn'd a time unto the sun
That lay half hidden in the sea,
As in his hollows rock'd asleep,
All trembled and breathed heavily,
Then arch'd his arm, as you have done,
For sharp masts piercing through the deep.
No shore or tall ship met the eye,
Or isle, or sail, or any thing,
Save white sea-gulls on dripping wing,
And mobile sea and molten sky.

"Farewell!—push seaward, child," he cried;
And quick the paddle-strokes replied.
Like lightning from the panther-skin
That bound his loins round about,
He snatch'd a poison'd arrow out,
That like a snake lay hid within,
And twang'd his bow. The leader fell
Prone on his face, and such a yell

THE LAST TASCHASTAS. 131

Of triumph from that savage rose
As man may never hear again.
He stood as standing on the main,
The topmost main, in proud repose,
And shook his clench'd fist at his foes.
He heeded not the shouts and shot
That follow'd him, but grand and grim
Stood up against the level sun ;
And standing so, seem'd in his ire
So grander than a leaping fire.
And when the sun had left the sea,
And slid behind his hollow graves,
The only thing that I could see,
Was, ever as the light boat lay,
High lifted on the white-back'd waves,
A head as grey and tossed as they.



We raised the dead, and from his hands
Pick'd out the shells clutch'd as he lay,
And two by two bore him away,
And wiped his lips of blood and sands.

132 *THE LAST TASCHASTAS.*

With sword we scoop'd a shallow home,
And laid him warm-wet in his blood,
Just as the lifted tide a-flood
Came charging in with mouth a-foam :
And as we turn'd, the sensate thing
Reach'd up, lick'd out its foamy tongue,
Lick'd out its tongue and tasted blood ;
The white lips to the red earth clung
An instant, and then loosening
All hold just like a living thing,
Drew back sad-voiced and shuddering,
All stain'd with blood, a strip'd flood.





THE TALE OF THE TALL ALCALDE,



*Shadows that shroud the to-morrow,
Glisters from the life that's within,
Traces of pain and of sorrow,
And may be a trace of sin,
Reachings for God in the darkness,
And for—what should have been.*

*Stains from the gall and the wormwood,
Dead Sea apples and myrrh,
A skeleton down by a hearthstone,
Blotches of heart's blood here,
But never the sound of a wailing,
Never the sign of a tear.*



THE TALE OF THE TALL ALCALDE.

Thou Italy of the Occident !
Land of flowers and summer climes,
Of holy priests and horrid crimes ;
Land of the cactus and sweet cocoa ;
Richer than all the Orient
In gold and glory, in want and woe,
In self-denial, in days misspent,
In truth and treason, in good and guilt,
In ivied ruins and altars low,
In batter'd walls and blood mis-spilt ;
Glorious, gory Mexico !



HERE mountains repose in their
blueness,
Where the sun first lands in his new-
ness,
And marshals his beams and his lances
Ere down to the vale he advances

With vizor erect, and rides swiftly
On the terrible night in his way,
And slays him, and with his sword deftly
Hews out the beautiful day,
Lay nestled the town of Renalda,
Famed for its maids, its silver mine,
Famed afar for its mountain wine,
And farther famed for its tall Alcalde.
Famed was he for a heart like woman,
For a deep humanity more than human ;
But a will and a way like a high-born lord—
Yet the kindest way and the keenest word—
Was passing clever and wise, and was
Learn'd profoundly in all the laws.

And the royalest feast of the year was given,
The yearly feast in commemoration
Of the Holy Mary's Annunciation ;
And the ears of night were rent and riven
By turbulent men made stormy with wine—
Wine by virgins press'd from the vine—
Wine like gold from the San Diego—

Wine blood-red from the Saint Bennetto,
White and yellow and ruddy red wine.
All came to the feast; none cried "Come higher,"
For the shaven priest and the portly squire,
The solemn judge and the smiling dandy,
The duke and the don and the commandanté,
All sat, or floated, or lay supine,
Sailing in one great sea of wine;
And roused, red-crested knight Chanticleer
Answer'd and echo'd their song and cheer.
They boasted of broil, encounter, and battle,
They boasted of maidens most cleverly won,
Boasted of duels most valiantly done,
Of leagues of land and of herds of cattle,
These men at the feast up in fair Renalda.
All boasted but one, the calm Alcalde,
Who sat stone-still in the wild wassail,
Though hard they press'd from first of the feast,
Press'd commandanté, press'd poet and priest,
To tell, as the others, his own life's tale;
And steadily still the attorney press'd,
With lifted glass and his face aglow,

Heedless of host and careless of guest,—
“A tale! the tale of your life, so ho!
For there’s not a man in all Mexico
Can trace your history a half decade.”
A hand on the rude one’s lips was laid;
“Sacred, my son,” a priest went on,
“Sacred the secrets of every one,
Inviolable as an altar-stone.
But what in the life of one who must
Have been so pure to be so just,
And lived a life that is half divine?—
What can there be, O advocate,
In the life of one so desolate
Of lack with matron, or love with maid,
Midnight revel or escapade,
To stir the wonder of men at wine?
But should the Alcalde choose, you know”—
(And here his voice fell soft and low
As he set his wine-horn in its place,
And look’d in the judge’s care-worn face)—
“To weave us a tale that points a moral,
Out of his vivid imagination,

Of lass or lover, or lovers' quarrel,
Naught of his fame or name or station
Shall lose in lustre by its relation."

Softly the judge set down his horn,
Kindly look'd on the priests all shorn,
And gazed in the eyes of the advocate
With a touch of pity, but none of hate ;
Then look'd down into the brimming horn,
Half defiant and half forlorn.

Was it a tear ? Was it a sigh ?
Was it a glance of the priest's black eye ?
Or was it the drunken revel-cry
That smote the rock of his frozen heart
And forced his pallid lips apart ?
Or was it the weakness like to woman
Yearning for sympathy
Through the dark years,
Spurning the secrecy,
Burning for tears,
Proving him human,

As he said to the men of the silver mine,
With their eyes held up as to one divine,
With his eyes held down to his untouch'd wine?—

“It might have been where moonbeams kneel
At night beside some rugged steep;
It might have been where breakers reel,
Or mild waves cradle men to sleep;
It might have been in peaceful life,
Or mad tumult and storm and strife,
I drew my breath; it matters not.
A silver'd head, a sweetest cot,
A peaceful stream, a balmy clime,
A cloudless sky, a sister's smile,
A mother's love, a church bell's chime
Are mine—are with me all the while—
Are hung on memory's sounding halls—
Are graven on her glowing walls;
But rage, nor rack, nor wrath of man,
Nor prayer of priest, nor price, nor ban,
Can wring from me their place or name,
Or why, or when, or whence I came,

Or why I left that childhood home,
A child of form yet old of soul,
And sought the wilds where tempests roll
Round mountains white as drifted foam.
Mistaken and misunderstood,
My hot magnetic heart sought round
And craved of all the souls I knew
But one responsive throb or touch,
Or thrill that flashes through and through.
Deem you that I demanded much?
Not one congenial soul was found.
I sought a deeper wild and wood,
A girlish form and a childish face,
A wild waif drifting from place to place.
O for the skies of rolling blue,
The balmy hours when lovers woo,
When the moon is doubled in her desire,
The dreamy call of the cockatoo
From the orange snow in his crest of fire,
Like vespers calling the soul to bliss
In the blessed love of the life above,
Ere it has taken the stains of this!

“The world afar, yet at my feet,
Went steadily and sternly on;
I almost fancied I could meet
The bustle of the busy street,
When from the mountain I look’d down.
And deep down in the cañon’s mouth
The long-tom ran and pick-axe rang,
And pack-trains coming from the south
Were stringing round the mountain high
In long grey lines as wild geese fly,
While mul’teers shouted hoarse and high,
And dusty, dusky mul’teers sang—
‘Señora with the liquid eye!
No floods can ever quench the flame,
Or frozen snow my passion tame,
Jouaña with the coal-black eye!
O señorita, bide a bye!’
Environ’d by a mountain wall
So fierce, so terrible and tall,
It never yet had been defiled
By track or trail, save by the wild
Free children of the wildest wood—

A wood that roll'd a sullen flood,
A sea that broke in snowy foam
Where everlasting glaciers rest,
Where stars and tempests have a home,
And clouds are curl'd in mad unrest
And whirl'd and swirl'd by crag and crest ;
An unkiss'd virgin at my feet,
Lay my pure, hallow'd, dreamy vale,
Where breathed the essence of my tale,—
Lone dimple in the mountain's face,
Lone Eden in a boundless waste—
It lay so beautiful ! so sweet !

“ There in the sun's decline I stood,
By God's form wrought in pink and pearl,
My peerless, dark-eyed Indian girl ;
And gazed out from a fringe of wood,
With full-fed soul and feasting eyes
Upon an earthly paradise.
Inclining to the south it lay,
And long leagues southward roll'd away,
Until the sable feather'd pines

And tangled boughs and amorous vines
Closed like besiegers on the scene,
The while the stream that intertwined
Had barely room to flow between—
It was unlike all other streams,
Save those seen in sweet summer dreams,
For sleeping in its bed of snow
Nor rock nor stone was ever known,
Only the shining shifting sands,
Sifted for ever by unseen hands.
It curved, it bent like Indian bow,
And like an arrow darted thro',
Yet utter'd not a sound or breath ;
It was as swift, as still as death,
Yet was so clear, so pure, so sweet,
It wound its way into your heart
As through the grasses at your feet.

“ Down in the tall untangled grass
I saw twin black bears careless pass,
And caught my rifle to my face ;
She chid me with a quiet grace

And said, ' Not so, for us the day,
The night belongs to such as they.'

“ And then from out the shadow'd wood
The antler'd deer came stalking down
In half a shot of where I stood ;
Then stopp'd and stamp'd impatiently,
Then shook his head and antlers high,
And then his keen horns backward threw
Upon his shoulders broad and brown,
And thrust his muzzle in the air,
Snuff'd proudly ; then a blast he blew
As if to say, the coast is clear.
And then from out the sable wood
His mate and two sweet dappled fawns
Stole forth, and by the monarch stood,
She timid, while the little ones
Did start like aspens in a gale.
Then he, as if to re-assure
The trembling and demure,
Again his antlers backward threw,
Again a blast defiant blew,
Then led them proudly down the vale.

“ I watch’d the forms of darkness come
Slow stealing from their sylvan home,
And pierce the sunlight drooping low
And weary, as if loth to go.
He stain’d the lances as he bled,
And bleeding, and pursued, he fled
Across the vale into the wood.
I saw the tall grass bend its head
Beneath the stately martial tread
Of the pursuer and pursued.

“ ‘ Behold the clouds,’ Winnema said,
‘ All purple with the blood of day.
The night has conquer’d in the fray,
The shadows live and light is dead.’

“ She turn’d to Shasta gracefully,
Around whose hoar and mighty head
Still roll’d a sea of golden red,
While troops of clouds a space below
Were drifting wearily and slow,
As seeking shelter for the night,
Like weary sea-birds in their flight ;

Then curved her right arm gracefully
Above her brow, and bow'd her knee,
And chanted in an unknown tongue
Words sweeter than were ever sung.
'And what means this?' I gently said;
'I spoke to God, the Yopitone,
The king, on yonder snowy throne.'
She softly said with drooping head,
'I bow'd to God. He heard me speak,
I felt his firm breath on my cheek,
He heard me my desires tell,
And he is good, and all is well.'

"The dappled and the dimpled skies,
The sweet stars and the tinted moon,
All smiled as sweet as sun at noon.
Her eyes were like the rabbit's eyes,
Her mien, her manner, just as mild,
And though a savage war-chief's child,
She would not harm the lowliest worm.
And though her beaded foot was firm,
And though her airy step was true,

She would not crush a drop of dew.
Her love was deeper than the sea
And stronger than the tidal rise,
And clung in all its strength to me.
A face like hers is never seen
This side the gates of Paradise,
Save in some Oriental dream,
And then none ever sees it twice—
Is seen but once, and seen no more,
Seen but to tempt the sceptic soul,
And show a sample of the whole
That Heaven has in store.

“ Lifting back the dark silk curtains
From the windows of her soul,
In the pulsing, wild uncertain
That around the heart’s rim roll ;
In a glory more than human,
Gazing in upon her soul,
That lust of man nor love of woman
Never yet had breathed upon,
By sliding moon or shining sun—

In upon its calm delight,
Was to me a life of light,
And I roam'd in fields elysian
'Neath the windows of her soul,
And the coldness of the soul
Melted in a sainted vision.
You might have pluck'd beams from the moon,
Or torn the shadow from the pine
When on its dial track at noon,
But not have parted us an hour,
Save by the force of brutal power ;
She was so wholly, truly mine.
Our lives were one unbroken dream
Of purest bliss and calm delight,
A flow'ry-shored untroubled stream,
A full-moon'd serenading night.

“ Sweet melodies were in the air,
And tame birds caroll'd everywhere.
I listen'd to the lispings grove
And cooing pink-eyed turtle-dove,
And, loving with the holiest love,

Believing with a grand belief
That everything beneath the skies
Was beautiful and born to love ;
That man had but to love, believe,
And earth would be a paradise
As beautiful as that above ;
My goddess, Beauty, I adored,
Devoutly, fervid, her alone ;
My Priestess, Love, unceasing pour'd
Pure incense on her altar-stone.

“ I carved my name in coarse design
Once on a birch down by the way,
At which she gazed, as she would say,
‘ What does this say ? What is this sign ? ’
And when I gaily said, ‘ Some day
Some one will come and read my name,
And I will live in song and fame,
As he who first found this sweet vale ;
And they will give the place my name,
Entwined with many a mountain tale,’
She was most sad, and troubled much,

And look'd in silence far away ;
Then started trembling from my touch,
And when she turn'd her face again,
I read unutterable pain.

“ At last she answer'd through her tears,
‘ Ah ! yes ; this, too, fulfils my fears ;
Yes, they will come—my race must go
As fades a vernal fall of snow ;
And you be known, and I forgot
Like these brown leaves that rust and rot
Beneath my feet ; and it is well ;
I do not seek to thrust my name
On those who here, hereafter dwell
Because I have before them dwelt.
They too will have their tales to tell,
They too will ask their time and fame.

“ ‘ Yes, they will come, come even now,
The dim ghosts on yon mountain's brow,
Grey fathers of my tribe and race,
Do beckon to us from their place,

And hurl red arrows through the air
At night, to bid our braves beware.
A foot-print by the clear McCloud,
Unlike aught ever seen before,
Is seen. The crash of rifles loud
Is heard along its farther shore.'

* * * * *

“ ‘They come ! they come ! the pale-face come !’
The chieftain shouted where he stood,
Sharp watching at the margin wood,
And gave the war-whoop’s treble yell,
That like a knell on fair hearts fell
Far watching from their rocky home.

“ No nodding plumes or banners fair
Unfurled or fretted through the air ;
No screaming fife or rolling drum
Did challenge brave of soul to come,
But silent, sinew-bows were strung,
And sudden, heavy quivers hung,
And swiftly to the battle sprung
Tall painted braves with tufted hair,

Like death-black banners in the air.
And long they fought, and firm and well,
And silent fought and silent fell,
Save when they gave the fearful yell
Of death, defiance, or of hate.
But what were feather'd flints to fate?
And what were yells to seething lead?
And what the few and feeble feet
To men who came with martial tread
And stood by wood and hill and stream
As thick as people in a street,
As strange as spirits in a dream?

“ From pine and poplar, here and there,
A cloud, a flash, a crash, a thud,
A warrior's garments roll'd in blood,
A yell that rent the mountain air,
Of fierce defiance and despair,
Told who fell, and when and where.
Then tighter drew the coils around,
And closer grew the battle-ground;
And fewer feather'd arrows fell,

And fainter grew the battle yell ;
Until upon the hill was heard
The short, sharp whistle of the bird.

“The calm, that cometh after all,
Look'd sweetly down at shut of day
Where friend and foe commingled lay,
Like leaves of forest as they fall.
Afar the sombre mountains frown'd,
Here tall pines wheel'd their shadows round,
Like long, slim fingers of a hand
That sadly pointed out the dead.
Like some broad shield high overhead
The great white moon led on and on,
As leading to the better land.
You might have heard the cricket's trill,
Or night-birds calling from the hill,
The place was so profoundly still.

“The mighty chief at last was down,
Broken the breast of brass and pride ;
The hair all dust, the brow a-frown,

And proud mute lips compress'd in hate
To foes, yet all content with fate ;
While, circled round him thick, the foe
Had folded hands in dust, and died.
His tomahawk lay at his side,
All blood, beside his broken bow.
One arm stretch'd out as over-bold,
One hand half doubled, hid in dust,
And clutch'd the earth, as if to hold
His hunting-grounds still in his trust.

“ Here tall grass bow'd its tassel'd head
In dewy tears above the dead,
And there they lay in crooked fern,
That waved and wept above by turn,
And further on, by sombre trees
They lay, wild heroes of wildest deeds,
Shrouded alone in the weeping weeds,
Bound in a never-to-be-broken peace.

“ Not one had falter'd, and not one brave
Survived the terrible struggle, save

One, save I, the young renegade,
The child of romance, the undismay'd,
The red man's friend, and—they held me so
For this alone—the white man's foe.

“ They bore me bound for many a day
Through fen and wild, by foamy flood,
From my dear mountains far away,
Where an adobé prison stood
Beside a sultry, sullen town,
With iron eyes and stony frown ;
And in a dark and narrow cell,
So hot it almost took my breath,
And seem'd but an outpost of hell,
They thrust me—as if I had been
A monster, in a monster's den.
I cried aloud, I courted death,
I call'd unto a strip of sky,
The only thing beyond my cell
That I could see ; but no reply
Came but the echo of my breath.
I paced—how long I cannot tell—

My reason fail'd, I knew no more,
And swooning, fell upon the floor.
Then months went on, till deep one night,
When long thin bars of lunar light
Lay shimmering along the floor,
My senses came to me once more.

“ My eyes look'd full into her eyes—
Into her soul so true and tried.
I thought myself in Paradise,
And wonder'd when she too had died.
And then I saw the striped light
That struggled past the prison bar,
And in an instant, at the sight,
My sinking soul fell just as far
As could a star loosed by a jar
Of jumbling world that had been hurl'd
By gods with elements at war
From out the setting in the ring,
The purpled, semi-circled ring
That seems to circle us at night.
She saw my senses had return'd,

Then swift to press my pallid face—
Then, as if spurn'd, she sudden turn'd
Her sweet face to the prison wall;
Her bosom rose, her hot tears fell
Fast, as drip moss-stones in a well,
And then, as if subduing all
In one strong struggle of the soul,
Be what they were of vows or fears,
With kisses and hot scalding tears,
There in that deadly, loathsome place,
She bathed my bleach'd and bloodless face.
I was so weak I could not speak
Or press my pale lips to her cheek;
I only look'd my wish to share
The secret of her presence there.
Then looking through her falling hair,
Still sadder—so that face appears,
Seen through the tears and blood of years—
Than burning Sappho's bathed in tears,
She press'd her finger to her lips,
Sweeter than sweets the brown bee sips.
Sadder than a grief untold,

Stiller than the milk-white moon,
She turn'd away. I heard unfold
An iron door, and she was gone.

“ At last, one midnight, I was free ;
Again I felt the liquid air
Around my hot brow like a sea,
Sweet as my Saint Madonna's prayer,
Or benedictions on the soul ;
Pure air, which God gives free to all,
Again I breathed without control—
Pure air, that man would fain enthrall,
God's air, which man hath seized and sold
Unto his fellow-man for gold.

“ I bow'd down to the bended sky,
I toss'd my two thin hands on high,
I call'd unto the crooked moon,
I shouted to the shining stars,
With breath and rapture uncontroll'd,
Like some wild schoolboy loosed at noon,
Or comrade coming from the wars,

Hailing his companeers of old.
Short time for shouting or delay,
The cock is shrill, the east is grey,
Pursuit is made, I must away.
They cast me on a sinewy steed,
And bid me look to girth and guide—
A caution of but little need,
For I on Sacramento's plain
When mounted warriors thunder'd by
And train'd their barbs to face or fly,
Once sprang upon the stoutest steed
That swept unmaster'd through the band,
Fierce, unbridled, wild and bare
As fabled wing'd steed of the air,
And clutching to his tossing mane
Swept onward like a hurricane,
And guiding him with heel and hand,
Lay like a shadow to his side,
And hurl'd the lance at topmost speed
Beneath the arch'd neck of my steed,
And pierced the cactus targe that stood
An imaged foe against the wood,

Amid the shouts of savage pride.
I dash the iron in his side,
Swift as the shooting stars I ride ;
I turn, I see, to my dismay,
A silent rider red as they ;
I glance again, it is my bride,
My love, my life, rides at my side.
By gulch and gorge and brake and all,
Swift as the shining meteors fall,
We fly, and never sound or word
But ringing mustang hoofs is heard,
And limbs of steel and lungs of steam
Could not be stronger than theirs seem.
Grandly as some joyous dream,
League on league, and hour on hour,
Far from keen pursuit, or power
Of sheriff or bailiff, high or low,
Into the bristling hills we go.
Into the snowy-hair'd McCloud,
White as the foldings of a shroud ;
We dash into the dashing stream,
We breast the tide, we drop the rein,

We clutch the streaming, tangled mane ;
Yet the silent rider at my side
Has never a sound or word replied.
Out in its foam, its snow, its roar,
Breasting away to the farther shore ;
Steadily, bravely, gain'd at last,
Gain'd, where never a dastard foe
Has dared to come, or friend to go.
Pursuit is baffled and danger pass'd.

“ Under an oak whose wide arms were
Lifting aloft, as if in prayer,
Under an oak, where the shining moon
Like feather'd snow in a winter noon,
Quiver'd, sifted, and drifted down
In spars and bars on her shoulders brown ;
And yet she was as silent still,
As black stones toppled from the hill—
Great basalt blocks that near us lay,
Deep nestled in the grass untrod
By aught save wild beasts of the wood—
Massive, squared, and chisell'd stone,

Like columns that had toppled down
From temple dome or tower crown,
Along some drifted, silent way
Of desolate and desert town
Built by the children of the sun.
And I in silence sat on one,
And she stood gazing far away
To where her childhood forests lay,
Still as the stone I sat upon.
And through the leaves the silver moon
Fell sifting down in silver bars
And play'd upon her raven hair,
And darted through like dimpled stars
That dance through all the night's sweet noon
To echoes of an unseen choir.

“ I sought to catch her to my breast
And charm her from her silent mood ;
She shrank as if a beam, a breath,
Then silently before me stood,
Still, coldly, as the kiss of death.
Her face was darker than a pall.

Her presence was so proudly tall,
I would have started from the stone
Where I sat gazing up at her,
As from a form to earth unknown,
Had I possess'd the power to stir.

“ ‘O touch me not, no more, no more ;
'Tis past, and my sweet dream is o'er.
Impure ! Impure ! Impure ! ’ she cried,
In words as sweetly, weirdly wild
As mingling of a rippled tide,
And music on the waters spill'd.
' Pollution foul is on my limbs,
And poison lingers on my lips ;
My red heart sickens, hot head swims,
I burn unto my finger-tips.
But you are free. Fly ! Fly alone.
Yes, you will win another bride,
Will win you name, and place, and power,
And ne'er recall this face, this hour,
Save in some secret, deep regret,
Which I forgive and you'll forget—

In some far clime where nought is known
Of all that you have done or seen,
Or dearly loved, or madly lost,
Or what your life this night has cost.
Your destiny will lead you on
Where, open'd wide to welcome you,
Rich gushing hearts and bosoms are,
And snowy arms, more purely fair,
And breasts—who dare say breasts more true
When all this dear night's deeds are done?

“ ‘They said you had deserted me,
Had rued you of your wood and wild.
I knew, I knew it could not be,
I trusted as a trusting child.
I cross'd the bristled mountain high,
That curves its rough back to the sky,
I rode the white-maned mountain flood,
And track'd, and track'd the pathless wood.
The good God led me, as before,
And brought me to your prison-door.
I heard you in the midnight call

My own name through the massive wall,
And yet you call'd so feebly wild,
I near mistook you for a child.

“ ‘That madden'd call! that fever'd moan!
In my sweet mountain-tongue and tone.
The keeper with his clinking keys
I sought, implored upon my knees
That I might see you, touch your breath,
Your brow, or breathe you low replies
Of comfort in your lonely death.
His red face shone, his redder eyes
Were like the fire of the skies,
And all his face was as a fire.
He cried, ‘But yield to my desire,
And you may hold his madden'd head
Until his latest breath is sped.’
Again I heard your feeble moan,
I cried, ‘And must he die alone?’
I cried unto a heart of stone.
‘Ah! why the hateful horrors tell?
Enough! I crept into your cell

Polluted, loathed, a wretched thing,
An ashen fruit, a poison'd spring.

“ ‘ I nursed you, lured you back to life,
And when you woke and call'd me wife
And love, with pale lips rife
With love and feeble loveliness,
I turn'd away, I hid my face,
In mad reproach and deep distress,
In dust down in that loathsome place.

“ ‘ And then I vow'd a solemn vow
That you should live, live and be free,
And you have lived, are free ; and now
Too slow yon red sun comes to see
My life or death, or me again.
O the peril and the pain
I have endured ! the dark stain
That I did take on my free soul,
All, all to save you, make you free,
Were more than mortal could endure ;
But fire makes the foulest pure.

“ ‘ Behold this finish’d funeral pyre,
All ready for the form and fire,
Which these, my own hands, did prepare
For this last night ; then lay me there.
I would not hide me from my God,
Or from the grandeur of the place,
Beneath the cold and sullen sod,
As if I would conceal my face
For ever from the circled sun,
In fear or shame for evil done ;
Nor in a gloomy bed of clay
Would I with reptiles rot away,
But in a fiery, shining shroud
Ascend to God, a wreathing cloud
At once, and glad as gala-day.’

“ She paused, she turn’d, she lean’d apace
Her glance and half regretting face,
As if to yield herself to me,
And then she cried, ‘ It cannot be,
For I have vow’d a solemn vow,
And God help me to keep it now !’

“I sprang with arms extended wide,
To catch her to my burning breast,
She caught a dagger from her side
And plunged it to its silver hilt
Into her hot and bursting heart,
And fell into my arms and died—
Died as my soul to hers was press’d—
Died as I held her to my breast—
Died without one word or moan—
And left me with my dead—alone.

“But why the dreary tale prolong?
And deem you I confess’d me wrong,
That I did bend an oily knee,
O’er all the deep wrongs done to me?
That I, because the prison-mould
Was on my brow, and all its chill,
Which made my very heart’s core cold,
Still coursing through my feeble frame—
Because I burst their earthly hell,
And rose again to life and light—
Did curb my free-born mountain will

And sacrifice my sense of right ?
Forget my wrongs ? Forget that cell
That render'd me to death and shame ?
Did ask them to forgive a youth,
Whose very goddess had been truth,
Until their persecutions came
And set his inmost soul aflame ?

“ No ! no ! and had they come that day
While I with hands and garments red
Stood by her pleading gory clay,
The one lone watcher by my dead,
With cross-hilt dagger in my hand
Still dripping red from her heart's core
That gush'd my reeking garments o'er,
The every white lord of the land
Who wore a badge or claim'd command,
And offer'd me my life and all
Of titles, gold, or power, or place,
I should have spat them in the face,
And spurn'd them every one.
I live as God gave me to live,

I see as God gave me to see.
'Tis not my nature to forgive,
Or cringe, and plead, and bend the knee
To God or man in woe or weal,
In penitence I cannot feel.
I do not question faith or creed
Of Christian, Protestant or Priest ;
I only know that faith to me
Is but a name for mystery,
Like to the magic of the East,
That darker grows in deepest need.
I take their dogmas, as they tell,
Their pictures of their godly good,
In garments thick with heathen blood ;
Their heaven with its harps of gold ;
Their horrid pictures of their hell,
Where proud rebellious spirits dwell—
Take hell and heaven undenied.
Yet were the two placed side by side,
Placed full before me for my choice,
As they are pictured, best and worst,
As they are peopled, tame and bold,

The canonized and the accursed,
Who dared to think, and thinking speak
And speaking act, bold cheek to cheek,
I would in transports choose the first,
And joy in hell with lifted voice.

“ I laid my dead upon the pile,
And underneath the lispig oak
I watch'd the columns of dark smoke
Embrace her red lips, with a smile
Of frenzied fierceness. Then there came
A gleaming column of red flame
That grew a grander monument
Above her nameless noble mould,
Than ever bronze or marble lent
To king or conqueror of old.

“ It seized her in its hot embrace,
And leapt as if to reach the stars.
Then looking up I saw a face
So saintly and so sweetly fair,
So sad, so pitying, and so pure,
I nigh forgot the prison bars,

And for one instant, one alone,
I felt I could forgive, endure.

“ I laid a circlet of white stone,
And left her ashes resting there ;
But when had wheel'd the seasons round,
Again I sought that sacred ground,
And mark'd the circle of white stone
With tall wild grasses overgrown ;
I did expect, I know not why,
From out her sacred dust to find
Wild pinks and daisies blooming fair ;
And when I did not find them there
I almost deem'd her God unkind,
Less careful of her dust than I.

“ Then when the red shafts of the sun
Came tipping down to where I stood,
I hail'd them with a redder one,
A lifted dagger red with blood.
And vow'd to dedicate my breath
To vengeance for disgrace and death.

* * * *

“Go search the annals of the North,
And records there of many a wail,
Of marshalling and going forth
For missing sheriffs, and for men
Who never more were known again—
Who disappear’d on mountain trail,
Or in some dense and narrow vale.
Go forth o’er Trinity and Scott,
That curve their dark backs to the sun;
Go, court them all. Lo! have they not
The chronicles of my wild life?
My secrets on their lips of stone?
My archives built of human bone?
Go, cross their wilds as I have done,
From snowy crest to sleeping vales,
And you will find on every one
Enough to swell a thousand tales.

* * * *

“The soul cannot survive alone,
And hate will die, like other things;

I felt an ebbing in my rage,
I hunger'd for the sound of one,
Just one familiar word,—
Yearn'd but to hear my fellow speak,
Or sound of woman's mellow tone,
As beats the wild imprison'd bird,
That long nor kind nor mate has heard,
With bleeding wings
And panting beak
Against its iron cage.

“ I saw a low-roof'd cottage lie,
Far, far below, at shut of day,
Red glinting in the tinted ray,
A lone sweet star in lower sky ;
Saw children sporting to and fro,
The busy house-wife come and go,
And white cows come at her command,
And none look'd larger than my hand.
The sight I could no more withstand,
But worn and torn, and tann'd and brown,
Heedless of all, I hasten'd down.

A wanderer wandering long and late,
I stood before the rustic gate.

“Two little girls, with brown feet bare,
And tangled, tossing, yellow hair,
Play'd on the green, fantastic dress'd,
Around a great Newfoundland brute,
That lay half-resting on his breast,
And with his red mouth open'd wide,
Would make believe that he would bite,
As they assail'd him left and right,
And then sprang to the other side,
And fill'd with shouts the willing air.
O sweeter far than lyre or lute
To my then hot and thirsty heart,
And better self, so wholly mute,
Were those sweet voices calling there.
Though some sweet scenes my eyes have seen,
Some melody my soul has heard,
No song of nymph, or maid, or bird,
Or gorgeous, melting, tropic scene,
Has my impulsive soul so stirr'd,

Or touch'd and thrill'd my every part,
Or fill'd me with such sweet delight,
As those young angels sporting there.

“The dog at sight of me arose,
And nobly stood, with lifted nose,
Afront the children, now so still,
And staring at me with a will.
‘Come in, come in,’ the farmer cried,
As busily the housewife hied;
‘Sit down, sit down, you travel late.
What news of politics or war?
And are you tired? go you far?
And where you from? Be quick, my Kate;
This boy is sure in need of food.’
The little children close by stood,
And watch'd and gazed inquiringly,
Then came and climb'd upon my knee.

•

“‘That there's my ma,’ the youngest said,
And laugh'd and toss'd her pretty head;
And then, half bating of her joy,

'Have you a ma, you stranger boy?
Have you, like me, a pretty home?
A pretty doll, and top, or toy?
Where do you live? and whither roam?
And where's your pa, poor stranger boy?'

"It seem'd so sweetly out of place
Again to meet my fellow-man,
I gazed and gazed upon his face
As something I had never seen.
The melody of woman's voice
Fell on my ear as falls the rain
Upon the weary, waiting plain.
I heard and drank and drank again,
As earth with crack'd lips drinks the rain,
In green to revel and rejoice.
I ate with thanks my frugal food,
The first return'd for many a day.
I had met kindness by the way!
I had at last encounter'd good!

I sought my couch, but not to sleep;

New thoughts were coursing strong and deep
My wild impulsive passion-heart ;
I could not rest ; my heart was moved,
My iron will forgot its part,
And I wept like a child reproved.
Never was Christian more devout,
Never was lowlier heart than mine.
Never has pious Moslem yet
When bearded Muezza's holy shout
Echoed afar from minaret,
Knelt lowlier down to saint or shrine,
Than knelt that penitent soul of mine
In humblest prayer for grace divine.

“ I lay and pictured me a life
Afar from cold reproach or stain,
Or annals dark of blood and strife,
From deadly perils or heart-pain,
And at the breaking of the morn
I swung my arms from off the horn,
And such sweet thoughts and pictures bore
Instead, and from that cottage door

I pass'd for other scenes and lands
With lighten'd heart and whiten'd hands.

“ Where orange-blossoms never die,
Where red fruits ripen all the year
Beneath a sweet and balmy sky,
Far from my language or my land,
Reproach or love, or shame or fear,
I came in hope, I wander'd here,
Yes, here; and this red, bony hand
That holds this glass of ruddy cheer . . . ”

“ 'Tis he,” cried the tawny advocate,
Fierce with passion and hot with hate,
In voice as shrill as a cock, and as loud—
“ 'Tis the renegade of the red McCloud,
Seize him, hasten you, hold him fast,
Revenge is sweet—it is mine at last!”

Slow the alcalde rose and spoke,
And the advocate shook in his chair,
“ Hand me! touch me, him who dare!”

And his heavy glass on the board of oak
He smote with such savage and mighty stroke,
That it ground to dust in his bony hand,
And heavy bottles did clink and tip
As if an earthquake was in the land.
He tower'd up, and in his ire
Seem'd taller than a church's spire.
He gazed a moment, and then, the while
An icy cold and defiant smile
Did curve his thin and his livid lip,
He turn'd on his heel, he strode through the hall
Grand as a god, so grandly tall,
And white and cold as a chisell'd stone.
He pass'd him out the adobé door
Into the night, and he pass'd alone,
And never was known or heard of more.







I N A.



*Sad song of the wind in the mountains,
And the sea-wave of grass on the plain,
That breaks in bloom-foam by the fountains,
And forests, that breaketh again
On the mountains, as breaketh a main.*

*Bold thoughts that were strong as the grizzlies,
But now weak in their prison of words;
Bright fancies that flash'd like the glaciers,
Now dimm'd like the lustre of birds,
And butterflies huddled as herds.*

*Sad symphony, wild, and unmeasured,
Weed warp and woof woven in strouds,
Strange truths that a stray soul has treasured,
Truths seen as through folding of shrouds,
Or as stars through the rolling of clouds.*



I N A.

SCENE I.

A Hacienda near Tescuco, Mexico. Young DON CARLOS alone, looking out on the moonlit mountains.

DON CARLOS.

DOPOCATAPETL looms lone like an
island
Above the white cloud-waves that
break up against him ;
Around him white buttes in the moonlight are
flashing .
Like silver tents pitch'd in the fields of heaven ;
While standing in line, in their snows everlasting,
Flash peaks as my eyes into heaven are lifted,
Like milestones that lead to the City Eternal.

Overtime when the sun and the sea lay together,
Red-welded as one, in their red bed of lovers,
Embracing and blushing, like loves newly wedded,
I have trod on the trailing crape fringes of twilight,
And stood there and listen'd, and lean'd with lips
parted,
Till the lordly peaks wrapp'd, as the chill night
blew over,
In great cloaks of sable, like proud sombre
Spaniards,
And stalk'd from my sight down the dark corridors,
And in the deep stillness—so still, so profoundly—
I surely have heard their strong footfalls retreating.

When the red-curtain'd west has bent red as
with weeping,
Low over the couch where the prone day lay dying,
I have stood with brow lifted, confronting the
mountains
That held their white faces of snow in the heavens,
And said, "It is theirs to array them so purely,
Because of their nearness to the temple eternal;"

And child-like have said, " They are fair resting-
places
For the dear weary dead on their way up to heaven."

But my soul is not with you to-night, mighty
mountains ;
It is held to the levels of earth by an angel
Far more than a star, earth-fallen or unfallen,
Yet fierce in her follies and head-strong, and
stronger
Than streams of the sea running in with the
billows.

Very well ! Let him woo, let him thrust his
white whiskers
And lips pale and purple with death in between us.
Let her wed, as she wills, for the gold of the
greybeard,
And to give in my hand his league-lands and
doubloons ;
And I set my face for you, O mountains, my
brothers,

For I yet have my honour, my conscience and
freedom,
My fleet-footed mustang and pistols rich-silver'd.
I will turn as the earth turns her back on the sun,
But return to the light of her eyes never more,
While red noons have a night and white seas
have a shore.

INA approaching, offers him her hand.

I N A.

I have come, dear Don Carlos, to say you fare-
well.

I shall wed with Don Castro at dawn of to-morrow,
And be all his own, firm, honest, and faithful ;
I have promised this thing : that I will keep my
promise

You who do know me care never to question.
I have master'd myself to say this thing to you
As a hunter would master an hungerèd grizzly ;
Hear me ; be strong, then, and say me farewell.
The world is his own who will brave its bleak hours.
Dare to confront the cold days in their column ;

As they march down upon you, stand, hew them
to pieces,
One after one, as you would a fierce foeman,
Till not one abideth between two true bosoms.

Here, standing here, in the vines by the twilight,
While the fair moon was resting her face pure and
pallid
On the broad breast of heaven as one that is weary,
And her yellow hair trail'd bridal veils down upon us,
And the merry stars play'd hide and seek in the
heaven,
And danced and dangled like golden threads tangled,
He said to me this : " I am old and am heirless,
And should I die so, by Mejico's statutes
My gold and my broad reach of lands do go forfeit
To the state, in despite of my will or my wishes ;
But you, my true wife, would be left my fair widow,
A queen in your wealth to enrich a young lover."

Then I told to him all, all my love and my struggles,
And he call'd me most brave, and most true, and
most noble,

And said that he knew all my yearnings already,
And only sought thus with his wealth to endow me.
So then I promised, and shall keep my promise,
True as the sun keeps his course in the heaven,
As stainless and pure, yet as warm as the summer.

Let us part as true friends, with a hope all
unutter'd;
Without strife or a word, or an ill will between us.
Turn you to the right or the left like to Abram.
The world is before us, come cloud, or come sky,
Give your hand here in mine and say bravely
good-bye.

[DON CARLOS *with a laugh of scorn flies
from the verandah, mounts his steed,
and disappears.*

INA (*looking out into the night, after a long silence*).

How doleful the night-hawk screams high in the
heavens,
How dismally jibbers the grey coyoté,
Squatting up there on his rock in the mountain,

The keen-toothéd coward ! when dawn comes
 about us,
 He will skulk low away to his red manzinetta,
 A perfectest man in his littleness cringing.
 Afar to the south now the red-tonguéd thunder,
 Mine equal brother, my soul's own companion,
 Talks low in his sleep, like a giant deep troubled ;
 Talks fierce, in accord with my own stormy spirit.
 But beyond him the supple California lion
 Has aroused him up in a dangerous rivalry—
 The beast, I could beard him alone in his lair,
 And toy with his mane, though it toss'd like a fire.

SCENE II.

A spur of Mount Hood overlooking the Willametté river. LAMONTE, a mountaineer, pitches his solitary camp for the night, and contemplates the scene.

LAMONTE.



FLUSH'D and weary messenger awest
 Is standing at the half-closed door of day,
 As he would say, good-night ; and now his bright

Red cap he tips to me and turns his face.
Were it an unholy thing to say, an angel
Beside the door stood with uplifted seal?
Behold the door seal'd with that blood-red seal
Now burning, spreading o'er the mighty West.
Never again shall the dead day arise
Therefrom, but must be born and come anew.

The tawny, solemn night, child of the East,
Her mournful robes trails on the distant woods,
And comes this way with firm and stately step.
* Afront, and very high, she wears her shining
Breastplate of silver, and on her dark brow
The radiant Venns burns like flashing wit.
Behold! how in her gorgeous flow of hair
Glitter a million mellow yellow gems,
Spilling their molten gold on the dewy grass.
Throned on the boundless plain, and gazing
down
Calmly upon the red-seal'd tomb of day,
Resting her form against the Rocky Mountains,
She rules with silent power a peaceful world.

'Tis midnight now. The bent and broken moon,
 Batter'd and black, as from a thousand battles,
 Hangs silent on the purple walls of heaven.
 The angel warrior, guard of the gates eternal,
 In battle-harness girt, sleeps on the field ;
 But when to-morrow comes, when wicked men,
 That fret the patient earth, are all astir,
 He will resume his shield, and facing earthward,
 The gates of heaven guard from sins of earth.

'Tis morn. Behold the kingly day now leaps
 The eastern wall of earth with sword in hand.
 Clad in a flowing robe of mellow light,
 Like to a king that has regain'd his throne,
 He warms his drooping subjects into joy,
 That rise rejoiced to do him fealty,
 And rules with pomp the universal world.

Far, far down in yon narrow spruce-lined cañon
 Is the storm-hid abyss of ghostly darkness.
 I see him now, as down and down I peer, -
 Crouch down, and shrink, and creep still up the
 gorge,

Like some great beast that would conceal its form
In nervous terror from the gaze of man.
The Willametté flashes back afar,
And down his path of palms goes ever on,
An endless caravan to some fair Mecca.
On either side he spreads his yellow vales
With strips of foamy streams and fringe of green,
As a merchant of the storied East unfolds
His gorgeous wealth of green and yellow silks.

'Tis harvest time, and valiant Nature bears
Upon earth's broad and never-failing bosom
A yellow shield of bright and gleaming gold,
Wrought out by patient husbandman to guard
His sturdy race against the hosts of famine.

Lifting the purple curtains of the gods
With flashing helmets that defy the clouds,
And make fierce fellowship with undimm'd stars,
Mount Hood! and fair Saint Helen's! snows eternal
As the sun, from this my mossy mountain throne,
With lifted and uncover'd head, I greet ye.

Soft snowy breasts on Nature's swelling bosom—

Nature benign and bounteous—let me draw
Pure inspiration from ye, as a child
Draws nurture from a loving mother's breast,
And be your child, your yearning wayward child,
And, sitting here as on a parent's knee,
Gaze wonder-full into the face of Nature.

DON CARLOS *descends the mountain gesticulating
and talking to himself.*

DON CARLOS.

O for a name that black-eyed maids would sigh
And lean with parted lips at mention of,
That I should seem so tall in the minds of men
That I might walk beneath the arch of Heaven,
And pluck the ripe red stars as I pass'd on,
As favour'd guests do pluck the purple grapes
That hang above the humble entrance-way
Of a palm-thatch'd mountain-inn of Mexico.
Oh, I would give the green leaves of my life
For something grand and real—undream'd deeds,
To wear a mantle, broad and richly jewell'd
As purple heaven fringed with gold at sunset,

To wear a crown as dazzling as the sun,
And holding up a sceptre lightning-charged,
Stride out among the stars as I have strode
A barefoot boy among the buttercups.
Alas! I am so restless. There is that
Within me doth rebel and rise against
The all I am and half I see in others ;
And were't not for contempt of coward act
Of flying all defeated from the world,
As if I fear'd and dared not face its ills,
I should ere this have known, known more or less
Than any flesh that frets this sullen earth.
I know not where such thoughts will lead me to :
I have had a fear that they would drive me mad,
And then have flatter'd my weak self, and said
The soul's outgrown the body—yea, the soul
Aspires to the stars, and in its struggles
Does make the dull flesh quiver like an aspen.

LAMONTE.

What waif is this cast here upon my shore,
From seas of subtle and uncertain men ?

DON CARLOS.

Subtle and selfish men ! ah ! that's the term !
 And if you be but earnest in your spleen,
 And the other sex across his shoulders curse,
 I'll stand beside you on this crag and curse
 And hurl my clench'd fists down upon their heads,
 Till I am hoarse as yonder cataract.

LAMONTE.

Why, no, my friend, I'll not consent to that.
 No true man yet has ever cursed a woman,
 And I, I do not hate my fellow man ;
 For man by nature bears within himself
 Nobility that makes him half a god ;
 But as in somewise he hath made himself
 His universal thirst for gold and pomp,
 And purchased fleeting fame and bubble honours,
 Forgetting good, neglecting helpless age,
 And rushing rough-shod over lowly merit,
 I hold him but a sorry worm indeed ;
 And so have turn'd me quietly aside
 To know the majesty of peaceful woods.

There is a freshness there, a perfect fairness,
A candour and unlanguage'd harmony
That wins you, and you worship unawares.

DON CARLOS (*as if alone*).

The fabled fount of youth led many fools,
Zealous in its pursuit, to hapless death,
And yet this thirst for fame, this hot ambition,
This soft-toned syren-tongue, enchanting fame,
Doth lead me headlong on to equal folly,
Like to a wild bird charm'd by shining coils
And swift mesmeric glare of deadly snake ;
I would not break the charm, but win a world
Or die with curses blistering my lips.

LAMONTE.

You startle me ! I am unused to hear
Men talk these fierce and bitter thoughts, and yet
In closed recesses of my soul was once
A dark and gloomy chamber where they dwelt.
Give up ambition—yea, crush out such thoughts
As you would crush from hearth a scorpion-brood :

For, mark me well, they'll get the mastery,
And drive you on to death—or worse, across
A thousand ruin'd homes and broken hearts.

DON CARLOS.

Give up ambition ! O rather than die,
And glide a lonely, nameless, shivering ghost
Down the dark tide of utter nothingness,
I'd snatch the last bank-bill a mother holds
To buy black bread to feed her starving babes,
And fire the homes that house a thousand orphans.
The temple-burner wiser was than kings.
Yet violence is not my inner nature ;
I would embalm my name in noblest good,
Would die a death of lofty self-denial,
If but the world beheld the sacrifice,
And men took note and told my fame to her,
That she might weep for spite and envy me
My sweet applause and dignity of death.
I'd write a song eternal as the sun,
As chaste and beautiful as is the moon,
That men might read even as they read the stars

In their enamell'd setting in the ring
Above, the crescent blue, in deep delight :
Denied the art and opportunity,
I'd leap strong arm'd upon the centre stage
Of this uncertain, accidental life,
Snatch up the slacken'd reins, and ruthless guide
The idle energies of the monster mob,
Reckless of every cost or pain to man,
To my grand honour, glory and renown,
While he should wonder, worship, call me wise.

LAMONTE.

But would you dare the curse of man and—

DON CARLOS.

Dare !

I'd dare the curses of omnipotent God !
I'd build a pyramid of the whitest skulls,
And step therefrom unto the spotted moon,
And thence to stars, thence to the central suns ;
Then with one grand and mighty leap would land
Unhinder'd on the shores of the gods of old

And, sword in hand, unbared and unabash'd,
Would stand forth in the presence of the God
Of gods ; there on the jewell'd inner-side
The walls of heaven carve with a Damascus
Steel, highest up, a grand and titled name,
That time nor tide could touch or tarnish ever.
Yea, anything on earth, in hell or heaven,
Rather than lie a nameless clod forgot,
Letting stern Time in triumph forward tramp
Above my tombless and neglected dust.

LAMONTE.

Seek not to crop above the heads of men,
To be a better mark for envy's shafts,
The voidings of dyspeptic sour stomachs.
Come to my peaceful home, and leave behind
These stormy thoughts and daring aspirations.
It is revenge that shows the savage heart,
And earthly power's a thing comparative.
Is not a petty chief of some lone isle,
With half-a-dozen nude and starving subjects,
As much a king as he the Czar of Rusk ?

In yonder sweet retreat and balmy place
I'll abdicate, and you be chief indeed.
There you will reign and tell me of the world,
Its life and lights, its sins and sickly shadows.
The pheasant will reveillé beat at morn,
And rouse us to the battle of the day.
My swarthy subjects will in circle sit,
And gazing on your kingly presence, deem
You great indeed, and call you chief of chiefs,
And knowing no one greater than yourself
In all the leafy borders of your realm,
'Gainst what can pride or poor ambition chafe?

'Twill be a kingdom, without king, save you,
Broader than that for which the Philip fought,
With subjects truer than he ever knew,
That know no law but only nature's law,
And no religion know but that of love.
There truth and beauty are, for there is nature,
Serene and simple. She will be our priestess,
And in her calm and uncomplaining face
We will read well her rubric and be wise.

A glass-like lake lies on this mountain-top ;
You bend you o'er, and resting on your palms,
Gaze down and down full fifty fathoms deep,
And see the speckled mountain-trout that sport,
All gold and silver sheathed and scaled, above
Rich palaces, brown, marble-built and massive,
Hewn out and built or ever man had named
The stars—when mighty Nimrod kept the chase.

Black, quillless pines, perfect as those ashore—
Proportion'd mighty, perfectly erect—
Stand dark and sullen in the silent courts.
You cast a pebble in, a nut in size,
And watch it wind and wind a weary time ;
Then see it plain as if 'twas in your hand.
Could you believe a flood could be so pure ?
So mirror-like, so strangely beautiful ?
Some tall pines press up to the water's edge
And droop adown their plumed and sable heads,
And weep above their buried comrades still
All night the dewy tears of nature.

A league across, the pines have broken rank,
And stand in small platoons, or stand alone ;
While far across the rolling sea-like meads
Do dash and wheel the spotted Indian steeds.
The warriors shout and gallop up and down,
And lovely maids in beaded moccasins,
Furs, thick with red and yellow feathers fringed,
As tall and straight as water tulés are,
Go forth in dusky beauty in their walk
Beneath the circling shadows of the pines,
Or bathe and dream along the borders of the lake.

And far beyond, where pines crowd thick and tall,
And waters dwindle to a narrow wedge,
The glad lake opes her pretty gushing mouth,
And down a foaming cataract of silver
Pours all her ceaseless song and melody—
The far source of the lovely Willametté.

At night, o'erspread by the rich purple robe,
The deep imperial Tyrian hue that folds
The invisible form of the eternal God,
You will see the sentry stars come marching forth

And take their posts upon the field above,
Around the great white tent where sleeps their
chief ;

* You will hear the kakea singing in a dream
The wildest, sweetest song a soul can drink ;
And when the tent is folded up, and all
The golden-fringed sentries faced about
To let the pompous day-king pass along,
We two will stand upon a sloping hill,
Where white-lipp'd springs come leaping, laughing
up,

With water spouting forth in merry song,
Like bridled mirth from out a school-girl's throat,
And look far down the bending Willametté,
And in his thousand graceful curves and strokes,
And strange meanderings, men misunderstand,
Read the unutterable name of God.

DON CARLOS.

Why, truly now, this fierce and broken land,
Seen through your eyes, assumes a fairer shape.
Lead up, for you are nearer God than I.

SCENE III.

INA, *in black, alone on a hill of Buena Yerba, by
the sea. Midnight.*

INA.



WEEP? me to weep? How I laugh to think
of it!

I lift my dark brow to the breath of the ocean,
Soft kissing me now like the lips of my mother,
And laugh low and long as I crush the brown
grasses,

To think I should weep! Why, I never wept!
never!

Even in punishments dealt me in childhood,
I crush'd my teeth in through my nails purple-
tinted,

And yet I kept still, though they crush'd blue
and burst them,

Till the ruddy blood ran from my stubborn lips
pouted.

Yea, all of my wrongs and my bitterness buried

In my brave baby heart, all alone and unfriended.
And I pitied, with proud and disdainfulest pity,
The weak who would weep, and I laugh'd at the
 folly
Of those who could laugh and make merry with
 playthings ;
Then I tuck'd down my chin and went under the
 lindens,
And made me companions of grave hornéd cattle.

No ! I will not weep now over that I desired.
Desired ? Yes, I to myself dare confess it,
Ah too, to the world should it question too closely,
And bathe me and sport in a deep sea of candour.
Bah ! Cowards deceive, and I know not what
 fear is.
Men lie, who lack courage to tell truth, the
 cowards !

Like Lucifer dower'd with pride and wild beauty,
With poverty cursed and the fiercest ambition,
I stood lone and loveless between my child-mother

And the coarse knotted knocks of the world's
rough corners,
Teeth skinn'd to the teeth in the fiercest face of it.

Then the kind dotard came and he bended him
forward,
Fast thrusting his head by my boy Don Carlos,
And so I did wed him. Would you now know
the reason?

I endured the cold frost for the fair spring to follow,
Did wed to the one 'cause I so loved the other,
And to get for him gold, gave my whole fair body.
So the old man is dead, and my heart's whole tattoo
Is a dance of glory and a deep delight.

O, alone and unlike to all other things earthly,
Was my brave boy-lover ; as an isle 'mid the oceans
Of men, so alike as are drops of water.
He did win my heart by his great defiance
Of men and manners and his thoughts unbridled.
But now a queen, after all my struggles,
I shall seek him out and surprise and enrich him ;
And seek him with songs as a wild boy-poet.

I did bear my burthen long, true, and all faithful,
Even down to the end, and did make no murmur,
But now he is dead and I dare joy at it.
And am I then the first that has joy'd thus fiercely ?
And held death's mantle while he did his office ?
What now if the odds were but this wild courage,
That does dare shape thought into plain living
language !

I have done my duty, and my dead is well buried,
Is grandly buried, in rich crape and coffin,
For an hundred carriages empty did follow
The dear lamented to the dun lone mountain.
He said he sought but my own endowment ;
Shall I then weep, who would not weep helpless—
Weep now in wealth and at what he desired ?

Let the world be deceived ; it insists upon it ;
Let it bundle me round in its black woe-garments ;
But I, self with self—my free soul fearless,
Am as frank as the sun, nor the toss of a copper
Care I if the world call it good or evil.

I am glad to-night, and in new-born freedom
Forget the world with my old companions,
The moon and the stars and the moon-clad ocean ;
I am face to face with the stars that know me,
And gaze as I gazed in the eyes of my mother,
Forgetting the city and the coarse things in it ;
For there's nought but God in the shape of mortal,
Save one, my wandering, wild boy-lover,
That I do esteem worth a stale banana.

Let them worship their god, go down and adore it,
The gold bull-calf in their low heart-temples ;
Attack the tiger in his cunningest jungles,
And wrench red gold from his supple cat-clutches ;
Let them come to the centre, with their slugs and
nuggets,
And stake their alcé on the blood-red diamond,
And roll, hot-breathing, as the heart beats loudly,
For the black will win, and the devil dance juba.

How fair falls the moon this night, midwinter !
On the still green leaves of the lisping poplars

Lie white-wing'd locusts as plain as at morning,
And down in the grass I see black-clad crickets.
Tread on ye ? not I, O ye sweet sad singers !
I would walk miles aside ere a sole should touch ye,
But not turn a step were ye strong bearded fellows.

The air hangs heavy and is warm on my shoulder,
And is thick with odours of balm and blossom ;
The great bay sleeps with the ships on her bosom.
Through the Golden Gate to the left-hand of

Lobos's

The white sea lieth in a deep sleep, snoring,
Lifting his breast to the moon, deep breathing.

O father of melody, mother of measure !
How oft I have knelt in the deep night-hours—
I—that knelt but once only in all life's battles,
To aught that lives, even then not asking,
But to give deep thanks to the great Eternal—
Have knelt to you for the gift of expression,
And pray'd you but teach me one true note of
measure.

But my song was as wild as the wing'd tornado,
And born fierce-beak'd, for the world unfitted ;
So I bound it down in a cage of iron,
I curb'd its flight, and I clipp'd its feathers,
And have dimm'd its fire, its spots and plumage,
And have tamed its glance, and its lithe swift
motion,
Till it lies dull, draggled as an eagle prison'd,
Despoil'd of its lustre and life and passion,
Warp'd for the world and the world's cold fashion.
[Sings.

O tempest-toss'd sea of white bosoms,
O breasts with demands and desires ;
O hearts fill'd of fevers, of fires,
Reaching forth from the tangible blossoms,
Reaching far for impossible things ;
Beat not nor break your warm wings
On the cruel cold bars any more.
Lo ! the sea, the great sea has his shore,
And lies in his limit ; the moon
Has her night and the sun has his noon.

What a wonderful world truly this is !
 How barren of wisdom and worth !
 How populous fall is the earth
 Of them that taste nought of its blisses !
 Then despise not the glories before you,
 With your feet on the things that are real :
 Take the tangible loves that adore you,
 Touch the forms that are flesh and can feel.

“ Eat, drink, and be merry,”—the liar
 Comes nearer the truth in that lie
 Than prophet or priest could desire.
 Go forth and be tried in the fire ;
 Go forth and be frozen in ices,
 In the turbulent tides, and afar :
 Stand still, and think twice and reply ;
 Yea, an answer that’s now reckon’d twice is
 Thrice wiser than modern ones are.

Leaves fade, and the frosts are before us ;
 Leaves fall and the winter winds are ;
 Loves fail ! Let us cross and deplore us ;

Loves die! Lift your hands as at war;
Lift your hands to the world and deny it!
Lift your voice, cry aloud and deny;
Cry aloud, "'Tis a lie," and belie it,
With lives made a beautiful lie.

SCENE IV.

A Wood by a rivulet on a spur of Mount Hood, overlooking the Columbia. LAMONTE and DON CARLOS, on their way to the camp, have met with other hunters, and are reposing under the shadow of the forest. Some deer are observed descending to the brook, and one of the party seizes his rifle.

DON CARLOS.

NAY, then, my friend, don't strike them from
your covert.
Strike like a serpent in the grass conceal'd?
What, steal into their homes, and when athirst,
And unsuspecting, they come down in couples,
And dip their muzzles in the mossy brink,

Then shoot them down without a chance to fly—
The only means that God has given them,
Poor, unarm'd mutes, to baffle cruel man !
Ah, now, I see you had not thought of this !
The hare is fleet, and quick at sight and sound,
His coat is changed with colour of the fields ;
Yon deer turn brown when forest-leaves are
brown ;
The dog has teeth, the cat has teeth and claws,
And man has craft and art and sinewy arms.
All things that live have some means of defence . . .

A YOUNG HUNTER.

Ay, all—save only lovely, helpless woman.

DON CARLOS.

Nay, woman has her tongue—arm'd to the teeth.

LUCUS.

O Timon, what can 'scape your bitterness ?
But for this sweet repose and peace of nature,

Upon whose breast we here recline and dream,
Why, you might lift your voice and rail at her.

DON CARLOS.

Oh ! I am out of patience with your faith !
What ! Nature quiet ? Peaceful, uncomplaining ?
I've seen her fretted like a lion caged,
Chafe like a peevish woman cross'd and churl'd ;
Tramping and foaming like a whelpless bear ;
Have seen her weep till earth was wet with tears,
Then turn all smiles—a jade that won her point ;
Have seen her tear the hoary hair of ocean,
While he, himself full half a world, would moan
And roll and toss his clumsy hands all day
To earth like some great helpless babe, that lay
Rude-rock'd and cradled by an unseen nurse ;
Then stain her snowy hem with salt sea tears ;
And when the peaceful, mellow moon came forth,
To walk and meditate among the yellow
Blooms that make blest the upper purple fields,
This wroth dyspeptic sea ran after her

With all his soul, as if to pour himself,
All sick and helpless, in her snowy lap.

Content! Oh, she has crack'd the ribs of earth
And made her shake poor trembling man from off
Her back, even as a grizzly shakes the hounds.
She has upheaved her rocky spine against
The flowing robes of the eternal God.
Nature is not content! Ha, I have heard her
Rushing at night swift down the stormy plain,
And, when the storm was thick and deep at night,
Have seen her press her face in blacken'd mask
Against my window-pane, and sob, and weep,
And wail, until the great round tears ran down;
And then, as if in savage desperation,
Seize violent hold and shake the sash and frame
Until they quail'd and quaked like aspen-leaf.
I did unbâr the window for her once,
This wild-lamenting, fretful, childish Nature;
She, like a wood-rear'd girl, rush'd reckless in
And hid her trembling in a darken'd corner.
Peer down there, half a league by cliff and bough,

Into the river's white complaining face,
And see his grey hair trail'd in shifting sands.
There comes a wail of terror and despair
Up from his white and trembling lips a-foam,
While he uplifts his thin white palms to pines
That bend dark-brow'd, and sad as o'er a tomb.
No! 'tis a pretty thought and pretty theme
That Nature reigns in majesty serene;
But lift the skirts of Isis, and be wise.

LUCUS.

Heartless ambition and unholy pride!
Hatred of man and strange contempt of woman!
At war with all and your own enemy!
While man is man, do not attempt to shine
Too bright, consult your peace, beware of pride;
For malice shoots alone at shining marks.
Beware of pride. I once did hear a learn'd
Man say, "By pride the angels fell from Heaven."

DON CARLOS.

By pride they reach'd a place from which to
fall.

LUCUS.

And were they better, happier having thus
Ascended, then prostrate to fall so far ?

DON CARLOS.

Yes ! Let me only win the love I woo,
Enjoy her but one brief hour, then lose all,
I will be winner that one gracious hour ;
And in my memory then will I possess .
A wall'd spring hung about with cooling palms,
Where weary recollection traversing
The barren desert of my life, might pause
And bathe herself, and, resting, rise refresh'd.
There be some men with hope so full and strong,
Their souls feed on the future—a green field—
But mine will not go on, but backward turns
As if for something lost or left behind—
Goes back against my will, an endless lane,
A stray sheep from the flock that ever keeps
The dusty centre of the unwater'd way,
And looks up weary at the fasten'd gates

That lead to cooling springs and verdant banks,
But closed against me when at first I pass'd.

LUCUS.

There was one once of nature like to this ;
He stood a barehead boy upon a cliff
Pine-crown'd, that hung high o'er a bleak north
 sea :
His long hair stream'd and flash'd like yellow silk,
His sea-blue eyes lay deep and still as lakes
O'erhung by mountains arched in virgin snow ;
And far astray, and friendless and alone,
A tropic bird blown through the north frost-wind,
He stood above the sea in the cold white moon,
His thin face lifted to the flashing stars,
And talk'd familiarly full face to face
With the Eternal God, in solemn night,
Confronting Him with free and flippant air,
As one confronts a merchant o'er his counter,
And in his vehement blasphemy did say :
" God, put aside this world—show me another ;
God, this world is a cheat—hand down another !

I will not buy—not have it as a gift.
 Put it aside and hand me down another,
 Another, and another, still another,
 Till I have tried the fairest world that hangs
 Upon the walls and broad dome of your shop,
 The finest one that has come from your hand,
 For I am proud of soul and regal born,
 And will not have a cheap and cheating world.”

DON CARLOS.

‘ The noble youth ! So God gave him another ?

LUCUS.

What, he, the poor and blasphemous crazéd
 beggar !
 So must you speak, or else the world will hiss you,
 Of these brave spirits God tries in His fire,
 Then takes unto Himself, as guards in heaven—
 Loves them and takes them as his own companions,
 In their strong youth, as the old Greeks have said,
 Leaving their dust in tracts most desolate.
 A bear, as in old time, came from the woods

And tore him there upon that storm-swept cliff—
A grim and grizzled bear, like unto hunger.
A tall ship sail'd adown the sea next morn,
And, standing with his glass upon the prow,
The captain saw a vulture on a cliff,
Gorging, and pecking, stretching his long neck,
Bracing his raven plumes against the wind,
Fretting the tempest with his sable feathers.

DON CARLOS.

My soul is faint. A tale while it may rest.

LUCUS.

She was tall, fair, and gentle as a fawn,
Her eyes were brown and lovely as a dream,
Her voice low, musical as meadow stream,
A holy spirit from a better land.
A mother stooping to her grave, beside
A little brother, these were all her kin,
And patient day by day she toil'd and hoped,
And bore her earnings to the humble home
Where watch'd the little boy by mother's bed:

And she, with a right noble pride, conceal'd
Her toil and poverty in the city's heart,
And kept her fair and neat, and so was call'd
Loveliest and most fair in all the land.
Sometimes when toil was done and mother slept,
She would with brother walk out in the eve,
And talk of pleasant things and hopes, that he
Might have in manhood holy recollections
To lean upon when weary in life's battle.
'Twas thus they met, pass'd, and so met again,
A fair and fine-appearing man, who came
To speak at last, when they met in their walk,
Of passing things : and sometimes he would linger
Beside the gate, and seem'd so pure and courteous
And earnest in his talk and in his manner,
That she was almost sad when toil would keep
Her bent and weary from the pleasant walk.
Leaning a time, playful, beside the gate,
He told the girl his name and birth ; as fair
As any in the land. Then she with firm
Respect, although it almost broke her heart,
Did bid the man a cold good-night, and pray'd—

At least she tried to pray—that she no more
Should see his face again ; for knowing him
So much above her birth, she foretime felt
The pain of looking forward to a hopeless
Though holy love. He would not be denied
But gently, step by step, did come to cross
The threshold, sit beside the mother's bed,
And talk in genial kind encouragement.
And then he sent a learn'd and skilful man,
And was so truly kind, that when the mother,
Restored, arose, she did reproach herself
That she had been so cold and so suspicious.
Then, as in gentle penance for her wrong,
She secret pray'd a blessing on his head.
And when one day in sport he gave the boy
Some shining coins, not counting of their worth,
She went aside and wept in sweet delight,
For every piece brought a reprieve from toil
That wore her day by day into the dust.
Well, so the season sped along, till they
Did walk by side upon the lawn, and there
Beneath some ancient elm-trees alone

Under the shadow of the moon he talk'd
Of love, and ask'd if she could love but him
And but believe in only him ; as if
'Twere possible the girl could love another.
She bade him go, as firmly as she could,
Although it crush'd her warm and noble heart
To even think to rob her of his presence.
Then when he would not go, she told him all,
Her poverty, her struggles and her pride,
She kindly thank'd him for his kindly deeds,
And said a last goodbye and turn'd her home.
He clasp'd her in his arms, and in the soft
September balm he forced a kiss upon
Her ruby lips that set her blood a-flame
With love, and hot tumultuous passion-love :—
“ Come on adown the dewy path of pleasure,
'Tis Nature calls to us, and Nature errs
Never. 'Tis but a present consummation
Of the delicious bliss of all true love.
And this I swear by all that's good shall be
Eternal as the burning stars above us.
Come, it will be a jewel precious, wrung

From the illiberal hand of love—a surety
Made doubly sure against a treacherous fate ;
Give me but this assurance of your love,
This sweet reward for all my patient waiting.”
She would have fled, but when he did reprove
And call'd her truth ingratitude, she thought
Of home, of heartaches, of—she knew not what,
Then in an impulse and blind passion—fell.

He met her at the gate next eve, not sad
Like her, but as to pluck her cheek in sport ;
But it was red and flush'd, and wet with tears.
And so he went on chuckling in his triumph,
Whistling along the lawn without a thought.
The mother died. The daughter droop'd and sank
Beneath her shame, and want, and cold reproach ;
But he, her gay destroyer, was fawn'd upon,
And flatter'd, and made welcome everywhere.

A young and unskill'd man, fitter to live
Poet than advocate, with more of genius

Than judgment, counsell'd her to bring an action ;
And she, half-crazed, believing the plain truth
Would all be told in court, and something thus
Of her cold crushing wrong clear'd up, consented.
But he was rich in gold and friends, and when
The time came round, was flank'd with counsel old
And learn'd, and wise, and skill'd in villany ;
While she all friendless sat alone beside
This one young advocate, for cruel slaughter.
Then there arose those grey and wise old men,
Men of the first profession of the earth,
And there before the assembled court did pour
Upon the head of this lone, weeping child
Invectives sharp and insults broad and coarse,
Until the mob did jeer, and howl, and hiss at her,
And the fat, powder'd judge upon his bench
Did shake, and have to bite his lip to crush
A smile, and so the bribed and rotten jury
At once declared him free of cost and crime.
Some caught the wretch up in their arms for joy,
While she all shunn'd, white as a ghost, look'd up
And said, " Is there a God ? " then fell as dead.

The winter tide was warm that night to her
Compared to the reproachful world, and so
She made her bed therein. A mighty wave
Did swirl high up, and cast her spotless soul
Upon the shore of her eternal home.

The tale is not all told—is not all known.
A bright-eyed brave young brother lives to strike,
And is a shadow to that smiling wretch,
That will pursue him to a gory shroud.
Thus much I saw in the current of your stream
Of social life, then struck out for the shore,
Sadden'd, and pain'd, and deeply disappointed.

DON CARLOS.

And had I been there in that crowded court,
Know you what I had done?

LUCUS.

Why, wept as did I when she told her tale.

DON CARLOS.

Wept! Oh, I am out of patience with your
weakness!

This nursing a gushing heart of sentiment
Does bring contempt on half the schemes of life.
Tears are a woman's weapons, sorry things
Even in her, but in man despicable.
What! lie down and be rode upon rough-shod?
No! face and fight, and be at least respected.
The lion is not a comely beast, but brave,
And is therefore revered above all beasts,
And bravest of the brave, is chosen king.
God and his angels fought for Heaven; Christ
Did beat with thongs the craven money-changers;
The chosen Peter wore a willing sword.
The stormy elements war through all the year;
Spring and bluff Winter strive for mastery;
Autumn and Winter struggle on the heath,
And I have seen them wrestle in the woods
Until the yellow leaves were all awlirl,
And sighs and groans went up and down the hills.
I would have leapt upon the fine occasion,

I would have seized the reins of opportunity ;
I would have pour'd a flood of scorian fire
Upon the heads of the grey and shameless counsel ;
I would have glow'd, and thaw'd all hearts like
snow ;

I would have hewn the villain inch by inch
To death, and deluged the whole court with tears,
Made others weep, but stood myself unmoved,
Like some proud rock amid a mobile sea ;
I would have won me such a fame that I
For years could feed my starved ambition on it.

LUCUS.

And so been there to triumph for yourself,
Instead of for the right and innocence ?

DON CARLOS.

You seek the impossible—ask good unmix'd.
Here do the kernel and the chaff all blend,
And good and evil intertwine. Hereafter—
If an hereafter is—the segregation.
Even the Christ, two thousand years ago,

In the far dawn while yet the world was young,
Newer, and purer from the hand of God,
Did find a traitor in His chosen twelve.

LUCUS.

So, not content to doubt and war with this,
You dare to doubt the truth of the world to come?

DON CARLOS.

If the most fair thing living, in your eyes
Grandeur, far more to you, than your Creator—
Had told you face to face sweet lovely lies,
Would you not sometimes doubt unlanguage'd
nature?
Doubt sometimes that most vague and shadowy
future
Of which our hope and yearning that it is
Is our first evidence and ground of faith?
And yet I do not wholly disbelieve
That I shall live hereafter. But I trample
The thought that all begin the after-world
A fair and even race as we have here.

This the beginning of the course, and here
'Tis given to look earthward or look up,
To grovel in the earth and be a brute,
Or, reaching upward, grow to be a god.
And then, again, I have a thought that we
Can never die till we have made ourselves
By life complete and fully ripe for death ;
That, it being in our choice to beautify
Or to defile the soul, soon as the first
Is fully done, the lofty soul is call'd,
As to a higher school ; and that the ill
Disposed will perish too, but perish utterly,
Soon as they reach a certain way in their
Descent, and bear enough of slimy sin
To sink them down beyond the resurrection.
And that they only linger long whose feet
Do wander up and down and halt between.

LAMONTE.

There's that in you that draws my soul to yours,
Your head, I fear, but not your heart, is wrong.
Lucas, leave you the answer unto me.

I will not answer now, but summon you
To yon grand courts to give in evidence.
Where sleep the monarchs of a thousand storms,
For ever still in shrouds of colour'd moss,
While green vines twine a pretty wreath above,
As crowning graves of dear and gallant dead,
The yew, in cloak of everlasting green,
Does sweep her pretty palms in winning eloquence,
While scarlet berries bead her lisping boughs
Like threaded drops of rainbow-painted dew,
Or pearls upon an Indian maiden's limbs.
Reposing there on couch of mossy carpet,
Where darkest green is wove with yellow moss,
And yellow wove with green, all undisturb'd
By sight or sound save birds of sweetest song,
While mighty trees above receive the red
And hot darts of the sun on bearded helmets,
Will come to you the higher evidence,
Stronger a thousandfold and more convincing
Than if produced by oath of all mankind.
With me in my untraversed wilds and caves,
My kingdom unexplored, you will read the book

Of nature that unclasp'd lies while the winds
Mesmeric as the fingers of your love,
Will turn the living leaves as you read on—
Will paint in lambent amber hues and Tyrian,
And strike in plaintive mellow tone a harp
That hangs upon the lightning-shiver'd pine,
And reading, we shall happier grow and better.
Nature will mightier seem yet milder there,
Because we shall be nearer to her face.

DON CARLOS.

And if I should, what then? What though I
met

My Maker face to face, as in the Mount?
Left mountain-bound in islands of the clouds,
What fame or fortune could betide me there?
I had as well know secrets of deep death,
Or hold in hand the keys of Cæsar's coffers,
And be for evermore forbid their use.

LAMONTE.

Why no! You'd gather up pure gems of thought,

Or catch bright fancies one by one that flit
 You by like beauteous orient birds, and cage
 Them up between a precious volume's lids ;
 Or like one gathering gold from out the sand,
 A little here, a little there, then all
 Mould in one bright and shining shield, and so
 Bearing it up, descend upon the world
 Like some proud conqueror of olden time ;
 Or shine forth in the newness of your thought,
 Like some bright lovely star that hastens forth
 Before its mates, chasing the sullen sun,
 And so be seen and known of all the world.

DON CARLOS.

What is there new atop of this old world ?
 Should e'er I come to write again, why I
 Would search among the quaint and dusted tomes,
 While the selfish world sought pleasure and repose,
 And shoddy did the European tour up,
 Much as a blockhead schoolboy does a task ;
 While men well skill'd in sales of soap and lard,
 And learn'd in all the art of packing pork,

Would coarsely tramp the sacred dust that
deeds,

When earth was blithe and young, have made
immortal,

(Where I would softly tread unshod and bared),

I'd pick up here and there from dusty masters

The ancient coins of loftiest, noblest thought,

And cast them in one shining shield of bronze,

And bearing it aloft high-heralded,

Well flank'd with sheets of broad advertisements,

Be call'd a bard of new-inspired song.

But I have tried this inky road to fame

And fail'd with this experience for my pains.

I'd throttle modest mien and word in this

Swift age, as base traducers of my fame ;

I'd cast meek modesty into the sea,

The Jonah that had brought me all my trouble.

I'd plant a preface full a-front my book

As you would plant a battery in war,

And bearing down all things that dared oppose,

With shout and flourish take the world by storm.

Or at the least I'd hold a touching tale

Before my book as you would hold a shield,
 And with it catch or turn aside the darts
 And poison'd shafts of killing criticism.
 But mind you, fame is not now won with ink,
 The author's pen's a lever, lifting others ;
 The stain of blood is readier seen from far,
 And gold, like some bright star 's at once beheld
 By all the world throughout the darkest day,
 And instant wins the worship of the mob.

The world has turn'd shopkeeper, go sell, sell ;
 Put on yourself a costly price, to sell ;
 Real cash-customers buy no cheap goods ;
 The mob has now got hold the money-bags,
 And skilful judges of corn, pork, and cabbage
 Do judge men by their arrogance and name.
 Assume a lofty air and sounding title.
 The barefaced fools outnumber and outshout
 The men of sense and solid worth and thought.
 The gilded chisell'd vessels that encase
 Most stupid, sour, and unwholesome wines,
 At once are pluck'd at by the money-mob,

The while the plain but precious bottled liquor
Accumulates the dust of generations.

Go buy and sell. Get gold. A golden lever
Moves more than e'er the Syracusan might.
Deceit brings wealth, wealth buys the bubble
fame,
Fame lulls the fever of the soul and makes
Us feel that we have grasp'd an immortality.

Oh, I have mock'd at man and shook with mirth.
Yet is in all a sort of savage justice.
Have you no time observed with what an odd
Yet an impartial hand are things divided?
The fool has fortunes thrust upon him, while
The man of brains is pinch'd with penury.
The dolt who feels as much of sentiment
As a milch-cow, fed in her field of clover,
Goes on serene through sweetest-smelling meads,
With maidens fainting for a breath of love,
And heiresses cast at his empty head
By fond mammas, whene'er he please to show it;

While he of finest sense is blown by fate,
 Like some sea-waif upon the frontier wild.
 The prettiest maiden is a screeching parrot,
 While she of wit is shorn of all of beauty,
 The gifted man is stoop'd and sallow-pale,
 The ass stands six feet up of lovely flesh,
 Wisdom means age and gout and ugliness,
 While the crude boy has health and ruddy beauty,
 And wisdom's sovran head is bow'd and bald,
 And the rich man envies the beggar's stomach.

LAMONTE.

Strange friend, you now do need repose. In yon
 Grand peaks that start like rolling thunder-clouds,
 So dark and tall they rear their sullen fronts,
 I would be proud to welcome you my guest,
 The first pale face that ever cross'd my threshold ;
 And when your fever'd mind has had repose,
 You will be more yourself, say gentler things.
 Beware ambition ! A fierce and rugged route,
 Beset with treachery and fearful falls.

DON CARLOS.

List ! I will tell a chapter of my life,
And then, if you can find aught else for me
To choose in all the burnt and barren path,
Why, I will lamb-like follow your dictates,
Till my feet are thin and naked as my palms.
I had but two thoughts, and two only passions
In the young morning twilight of my life.
Love, gentle, patient, lute-voiced, tender love,
And proud, and lofty, laudable ambition.
I loved her ! Oh, if love was e'er a flame,
Then that did burn perpetual in my breast,
Which was the altar, and my heart the offering ;
My soul the incense rising glad to her.
Was it my fault that I was only born
With these two thoughts, or hopes, or plans, or
passions ?
The one a gentle, pure, abiding love,
The one a towering and grand ambition ?
Mine was a broad and universal love,
That burn'd and beam'd a far and tender light ;
And she its focus, caught it all, and centred

Its warm and glowing rays on her proud self.
But I had not that sweet and glittering bait
That woos and traps a gentle woman's heart.
A gold-lined wretch, too little-soul'd for death,
Became the chosen suitor of her hand ;
Then she, as if to mock me, sought me out,
And in a stately, patronizing way,
Wish'd me on well in all my noble plans
And promises and lofty aspirations ;
And, taunting me with the unholy thought
Of waiting meanly for a dead man's wealth,
Did reach her hand to give a grand farewell.
My heart up to that day had held two flames,
That burn'd—two conflagrations in a town,
But then and there they blended into one ;
Ambition did absorb all else, and love,
My love so tall and fair and gently-rear'd,
With no thing earthly left to feed upon,
Did die so dead, so utterly and entire,
It did not leave a trace or recollection.
Ambition doth usurp the place it grew in,
And but one thought, one passion, ah ! one flame

Licks out its forkèd tongue to very heaven.
Oh ! I will win a laurel wreath of fame,
Though it be wet with blood and bitter tears,
If but to cast it down, a reptile fang'd
And coil'd up in her gay and flowery path,
To strike its fangs for ever in her peace.

L A M O N T E .

Give me your hand, your right in this my left—
Its blood comes nearer from the heart, and then
My right is dead, deader than this your love ;
For love, like Lazarus, can only sleep,
But, breathed upon by love and hope, will rise,
Rise up a loftier and a holier love.
I know you now ; I am an elder brother,
For sorrow and deceit have made us kin.
From want and disappointment, bitter breasts,
We two have drawn our stormy natures.

*A Young HUNTER ascends the mountain and
approaches.*

DON CARLOS.

Ho! whom, now, have we here? talk of the devil,
And he is at hand; say, who are you, and whence?

HUNTER.

I am a poet, and dwell down by the sea.

DON CARLOS.

A poet! a poet, forsooth! fool! Hungry fool!
Would you know what it means to be a poet?
It is to want a friend, to want a home,
A country, money,—ay, to want a meal.
It is not wise to be a poet now,
For the world has so fine and modest grown,
It will not praise a poet to his face,
But waits till he is dead some hundred years,
Then uprears marbles cold and stupid as itself.

But rest you here, and while the red-hot sun
Wheels on, and sleep my friends beneath the boughs,
Do, pray, beguile the hour with a song.

HUNTER.

You sit before me here to-night,
But not beside me, not beside—
Are beautiful but not a bride.
Some things I recollect aright,
Though full a dozen years are done
Since we two met one winter night—
Since I was crush'd as by a fall;
For I have watch'd and pray'd through all
The shining circles of the sun.

I saw you 'mid the bright and brave.
I sought you in a dewy eve,
When shining crickets trill and grieve.
You smiled, and I became a slave.
A slave! I worshipp'd you at night,
When all the blue field blossom'd red
With dewy roses overhead
In sweet and delicate delight.
I was devout. I knelt at night—
I knelt at noon and tried to pray
To Him who doeth all things well.

I tried in vain to break the spell;
My prison'd soul refused to rise
And image saints in Paradise
While one was here before my eyes.
You came between alway, alway.

* * * * *

The moon was white, the stars a-chill—
A frost fell on a soul that night,
And lips were whiter, colder still.
A soul was black that erst was white.
And you forget the place—the night!
Forget that aught was done or said—
Say, this has pass'd a long decade—
Say, not a single tear was shed—
Say, you forget these little things!
Is not your recollection loth?
Well, little bees have bitter stings,
And I remember for us both.

No, not a tear. Do men complain?
The outer wound will show a stain,

And we may shriek at idle pain ;
But pierce the heart, and not a word
Or wail, or sign, is seen or heard.

I did not blame—I do not blame.
My wild heart turns to you the same,
Such as it is ; but O, its meed
Of faithfulness and trust and truth,
And gushing confidence of youth
I caution you, is small indeed.

I follow'd you, I worshipp'd you,
And I would follow, worship still ;
But if I felt the blight and chill
Of frosts in my uncheerful spring,
And show it now in riper years
In answer to this love you bring—
In answer to this second love,
This wail of an unmated dove,
In cautious answer to your tears,
You, you know who taught me disdain !
But deem you I would deal you pain ?

I joy to know your heart is light,
I journey glad to know it thus,
And could I dare to make it less ?
Yours—you are day, but I am night.

God knows I would descend to-day
Devoutly on my knees and pray
Your way might be one path of peace
Through bending boughs and blossom'd trees,
And perfect bliss through roses fair ;
But know you, back—one long decade,
How fervently, how fond I pray'd ?
What was the answer to that prayer ?

The tale is old and often told
And lived by more than you suppose—
The fragrance of a summer rose
Press'd down beneath the stubborn lid,
When sun and song are hush'd and hid,
And summer days are grey and old.

We parted so. Amid the bays
And peaceful palms and song and shade

Your cheerful feet in pleasure stray'd
Through all the swift and shining days.

You made my way another way,
You bade it should not be with thine—
A fierce and cheerless route was mine;
But we have met, at last, to-day.

You talk of tears—of bitter tears,
And tell of tyranny and wrong,
And I re-live some stinging jeers,
Back, far back, in the leaden years.
A lane without a turn is long,
I muse, and whistle a reply—
Then bite my lips to crush a sigh.

You sympathize that I am sad,
I sigh for you that you complain,
I shake my yellow hair in vain,
I laugh with lips but am not glad.

DON CARLOS.

Hold! hold your tongue, and hold my aching
head!

'Tis well for you the Roman mob is dead.
This stuff of yours is full of pompous I's
As a candidate for Congress is of lies.
Why talk so loudly of yourself at large?
Your neighbours do that for you, free of charge!
This poetry's not of the heart, but stomach.
Not sentiment, but 'tis your indigestion
Disturbs the balance-wheel which rules your brain.
Love food the less—respect your stomach more,
For more have groan'd and died from over-use
Of knives and forks than ever fell in war
By bloody sword and bayonet and ball.

[The HUNTER rises and moves away.]

DON CARLOS.

Why, what's the haste? You'll reach there
soon enough.

HUNTER.

Reach where?

DON CARLOS.

The Inn to which all earthly roads do tend;
The "neat apartments furnish'd—see within;"

The "furnish'd rooms for single gentlemen ;"
 The narrow six-by-two where you will lie
 With cold blue nose pointing up to the grass,
 Labell'd and box'd, and ready all for shipment.
 'Twas said of old that all roads led to Rome,
 But all roads now do lead to this small Inn.
 'Tis just so many leagues ahead of you,
 Why, then, make haste to cross the space between ?

SCENE V.

LAMONTE'S *Camp-fire in the Mountains.*

DON CARLOS, LAMONTE, *the HUNTER, and others,*
seated around, smoking and telling tales of home
and how they came to take to the Mountains.

OLD LAMONTE, *the mountaineer, lounging at one side,*
talking with the Young Hunter, and pointing out
to him his new companions :—



GREET you welcome to these wild moun-
 tains,

As will these my comrades at their good leisure :

And now meantime, that you'll know them

better,

Yon fair-hair'd man, all in beaded buckskin .

And belt of wampum, now peering skyward,

Is noble young Lucus, a heart-sick lover,

That has fled a coward from the shafts of

Cupid,

Fearing far less the red Indians' arrows.

The man beyond him, thick-lipp'd and surly,

'Tis said, is a patriot from merry old England,

Who took to these mountains for the good of his

country.

To the left, by the pine, is a dollarless marquis,

At talk with a scholar high-bred, of Oxford,

Self-exiled, say, for some gay peccadillo.

Beyond, in the shade, is a Southern gentleman,

Talking with one of his ten brown women.

That black Kanuk, with his hair on his shoulders,

Has herds and leagues on the North Red River,

And wigwams alive with olive-hued children.

Over here, with his pipe, is a thoughtfulest

German,

Profound, it is said, in his lore and letters,
And silent in all of the tongues of Europe.
Yon fast young man, with a rose in his bosom,
Is a Spaniard waiting for a dear relation
To die, to come to his hard-earn'd fortune.
And last I name is a long-nosed Yankee,
Shrewdly watching to improve his chances,
Ready to trade, trap, preach, or peddle.
Such are the men of the rough Rocky Mountains,
Not hairy monsters as some do pronounce us,
But men blown up from the world's four
quarters,
Gentle or vicious, serene or savage,
Common only in undoubted courage.
Hist ! list and learn, as they tell their adventures.

*A small grey Frenchman, rising and gesticulating
excitedly, ends a tale thus :*

Alas the sight I saw that night !
Alas that I should tremble here !

I know 'tis not a coward fear,
And yet I shiver as in fright.

O mosses, stream you down and down,
And trail you to the dewy ground,
And maples reaching as for alms
Your broad and many-finger'd palms,
Fold me, hold me, clasp me tight,
As ever mother held a child,
And shut out sense and sound and light,
For I am wild, O I am wild.

The blue fields blossom'd yellow bloom
Of brilliants set in purple gloom,
A silver shield slid on and on
Between me and the better land,
And I was glad. I kiss'd my hand
To melting stars and mellow moon—
I left the feast full oversoon,
And sought the peerless paragon.
Gay jesting at her clever art,
In hiding in some spot unknown,

I sought her, thought her mine, my own—
I had despised a baser thought.
I sought her as I would be sought
With boundless faith and beating heart,
Fill'd full of sweet uncertainties,
Among the moonlit fruited trees.

Alas, the sight I saw that night
Through striped bars of streaming light
And boughs that whisper'd plaintively
In solemn sympathy with me !
A red dead leaf was in her hair,
Full half a swelling breast was bare
And mad disorder everywhere.
And gliding through a thorny brake
And sliding like a slimy snake
I saw him stooping steal away
Like serpent caught in Paradise
That hid it from the face of day
With guilty and unholy eyes.

I saw a sight that night, that night,

Because I could not help but see—
Because the moon was bleach'd so white—
Because the stars were yellow light—
Because they blossom'd in a tree
And dropp'd their blossoms on the grass—
And saw because, alas, alas,
An evil spirit guided me.

He was my friend. He ate my bread.
He counsell'd very wise and well ;
“ I love you more than words can tell ;”
He many and many a time had said.
He suck'd the juices from my fruit
And left for me the bitter rind.
I am not crazed—it was unkind
To suck the sweetness from my fruit
And give me back the bitter rind.

And did I curse or crush or kill ?
Go down to yonder wooded gate,
Go down, go down, it groweth late ;
You hesitate and hesitate—
I tremble as if in a chill.

It open'd very wide that night,
For two went through—but one return'd—
And when its rusty hinges turn'd
They creak'd as if in pain or fright.

Three finger-prints are on the bar—
Three finger-prints of purple gore.
You scan my hand—here, scan it more,
And count my fingers o'er and o'er,
You cannot see a sign of gore.
I lost one finger in the war,
And is it not an honour'd scar?

DON CARLOS.

You next, fair-hair'd and sad-faced Lucus,
Be sworn on the book to be cross-question'd;
Tell your adventure, and without digression;
Good for the soul is a frank confession.

LUCUS.

She was not full tall, was not fairer than others,
But there was in her eyes, all proud and glorious,

A dream, a wonder, a dangerous witchery ;
And when into yours they did look steadfastly
With a longing and trust as if asking sympathy,
As in talk, low-voiced, with your soul in confidence,
While her rich full roses, red-pouting and luscious,
Kept forth sweet-blended their mirth and sentiment,
A battery shelter'd by a brown flood of tresses,
That lay or lifted in the warm winds fretted
About a brow of most marvellous beauty,
You were less of a man than I should desire
To know much of, to have been unmoved.

Where pine-tops toss curly clouds to heaven,
And shake them far like to downs of thistle,
In a rift of cañon cleft so asunder
That it seem'd as 'twere earth's lips half open'd,
Where men wrought gold from the rock-ribb'd
 mountain,
She patient labour'd with her faithful mother.
And these brave giants, men brown'd and bearded,
Did bless the brown earth as she walk'd upon it,
And call her more pure than their yellow gold treasures.

By the trails sometimes that wound round the
mountain

Above brave men toiling long at the sluices,
The cheery girl passing would kindly and playfully
Call to them all words of kind encouragement,
Then awake the echoes of the frowning mountains
With gushing laugh at their honest answers,
And then pass on in a blaze of glory.
They, blessing her heart, would then put from them
Their coarser thoughts, and, bent to the boulders,
Would recall fair faces far over the water,
And be, for her, the happier and better
For many and many a day thereafter.

In the shadows a-west of the sunset mountains,
Where old-time giants had dwelt and peopled,
And built up cities and castled battlements,
And rear'd up pillars that pierced the heavens,
A student dwelt, of the book of nature—
An ardent lover of the pure and beautiful—
Devoutest lover of the true and beautiful—
Profoundest lover of the grand and beautiful,

With a heart all impulse, intensest passion,
Who believed in love as in God Eternal—
A dream while the waken'd world went over,
An Indian summer of the sullen seasons ;
And he sang wild songs like the wind in cedars,
Was tempest-toss'd as the pines, yet ever
As fix'd in truth as they in the mountains.

He had heard her name as one hears of a princess,
Her glory had come unto him in stories ;
From afar he had look'd as entranced upon her ;
He gave her name to the wind in measures,
And he heard her name in the deep-voiced cedars,
And afar in the winds rolling on like the billows.
Her name in the name of another for ever
Gave to his numbers their grandest strophe ;
He enshrined her image in his heart's high temple,
And saint-like held her, too sacred for mortal.

* * * * *

He came to fall like a king of the forest
Caught in the strong stormy arms of the wrestler.
He forgot his songs, his crags and his mountains,

And nearly his God, in his wild deep passion ;
And when he had won her and turn'd him homeward,
With the holiest pledges love gives its lover,
The mountain route was as strewn with roses.
Can a high love then be a thing unholy,
To make us better and bless'd supremely ?
The day was fix'd for the feast and nuptials ;
He crazed with impatience at the tardy hours ;
He flew in the face of old time as a tyrant ;
He had fought the days that stood still between
 them,
One by one, as you fight with a foeman,
Had they been animate and sensate beings.

At last then the hour came coldly forward,
When Mars was trailing his lance on the mountains,
He rein'd his steed and look'd down in the cañon
To where she dwelt, with a heart of fire.
He kiss'd his hand to the smoke slow curling,
Then bow'd his head in devoutest blessing ;
His spotted courser did plunge and fret him
Beneath his gay and silk-fringed caruña,

And toss his neck in a black mane banner'd ;
Then all afoam, plunging iron-footed,
Dash'd him adown with a wild impatience.

A coldness met him, like the breath of a cavern,
As he joyously hasten'd across the threshold.
She came, and coldly she spoke and scornfully,
In response to his warm and impulsive passion.
All things did array them in shapes most hateful,
And life did seem but a jest intolerable.
He dared to question her why this estrangement ;
She spoke with a strange and a stiff indifference,
And bade him go on all alone life's journey.

Stern then and tall he did stand up before her,
And gaze dark-brow'd through the low narrow
casement
For a time, as if warring in thought with a passion ;
Then crushing hard down the hot welling bitterness,
He folded himself in a sullen silentness
And turn'd for ever away from her presence :
Bearing his sorrow like some great burthen—

Like a black night-mare in his hot heart muffled ;
With his faith in the truth of woman all shatter'd
Like a vase of porcelain dash'd to pieces
On the stones below from a mantel of marble.
He heard a laughter as if in mockery,
And vaulting his saddle, he did take his journey
Through the densest wood by the darkest windings,
As the things best fitting his fate and humour,
And hurl'd a curse backward hot over his shoulder.
Another had woo'd her, one gay, of earth earthy,
Another had won her, a gay dashing soldier,
With gold epaulets and a uniform polish'd,
With sword and red sash, and a tongue swift and
 ready
With loud talk of battles, of fine deeds of daring
That wins so most willing the ear of woman,
He did win this jewel from the lordly mountain,
Of its wealth never counting, its worth never
 dreaming,
In truth not possessing one sense so refin'd
As to know its value, had it all been told him.

* * * * *

'Mid Theban pillars, where sang the Pindar,
Breathing the breath of the Grecian islands,
Breathing in spices and olive and myrtle,
Counting the caravans, curl'd and snowy,
Slow journeying over his head to Mecca
Or the high Christ-land of most holy memory,
Counting the clouds through the boughs above him,
That brush'd white marbles that time had
chisell'd

And set up as tombs on the great dead city,
Letter'd with solemn but unread moral,
A student rested in the red-hot summer.
He took no note of the things about him
But dream'd and counted the clouds above him ;
His soul was troubled and his sad heart's Mecca
Was a miner's home far over the ocean,
Banner'd by pines that did brush the heavens.

When the sun went down on the bronzed Morea,
He read to himself what I here shall read you,
That came as a wail from the one he worshipp'd,
Sent over the seas by an old companion.

But it spoke no word of him, or remembrance.
He was sad, for he felt as one long-forgotten,
And said: "In the leaves of her fair heart's album
She has cover'd my face with the face of another.
Let the great sea lift like a wall between us,
High-back'd, with his mane of white storms for ever,
I shall learn to love, I shall wed my sorrow,
I shall take as a spouse the days that are perish'd;
I shall dwell in a land where the march of genius
Made tracks in marble in the days of giants;
I shall sit in the ruins where sat the Marius,
Grey with ghosts of the great departed."
He read, and said when he read once again:—

"Strangely wooing are the worlds above us,
Strangely beautiful is the Faith of Islam,
Strangely sweet are the songs of Solomon,
Strangely tender are the teachings of Jesus,
Strangely cold is the sun on the mountains,
Strangely mellow is the moon in old ruins,
Strangely pleasant are the stolen waters,
Strangely simple and unwooing is virtue,

Strangely lighted is the North night land,
Strangely strong are the streams in the ocean,
Strangely true are the tales of the orient,
Strangely winning is a dark-eyed widow,
Strangely wayward are the ways of lovers,
But stranger than all are the ways of women."

(*Reads*). "Here at last we bury our love,
This seal closes the coffin's lid;
The clerk below, the court above,
Pronounce it dead; the corpse is hid;
And I, who never cross'd your will,
Consent—that you may have it still.

"So here our paths of life at last
Divide—diverge, like delta'd Nile,
Which after desert dangers pass'd
Of many and many a thousand mile,
As constant as a column stone,
Seeks out the sea, divorced—alone.

"What reck's it now whose was the blame?
But call it mine; for better used

Am I to wrong and cold disdain,
Can better bear to be accused
Of all that wears the shape of shame
Than have you bear one touch of blame.

“ I know yours was the lighter heart,
And yours the hope of grander meed ;
Yet did I falter in my part.
But there is weakness in defeat,
And I had felt its iron stride
While your strong feet were yet untried.

“ I make no moan, but steady, calm,
Sphinx-like I gaze on days ahead.
No wooing word, no pressing palm,
No sealing love with lips seal-red.
Who shall account for love that's lost ?
Who shall account for tears it cost ?

“ One deep spring in a desert sand,
Two dark and mystic pyramids,
Some lonely palms on either hand,

All water'd by my weeping lids,
Are all my life has realized,
Of all I cherish'd, all I prized :

“ Of all I dream'd and hoped in youth,
Of love by streams and love-lit ways,
While my heart held its type of truth,
Through all the tropic golden days,
While you the oak, and I the vine,
Clung palm in palm through cloud or shine.

“ Some time when clouds hang overhead,
(What weary skies without one cloud !)
You may muse on this love that's dead—
Muse calm nor be so strong and proud,
And say, ‘ At last it comes to me,
That none was ever true as she.’

“ My sin was that I loved too much,
But I enlisted for all the war,
Till we the dark sea-shore should touch,
Beyond Atlanta—near or far—

And a truer soldier never yet
Bore shining sword or bayonet.

“ Which now is the brighter, ink or blood ?
Which now is the keener, sword or pen ?
Time will reveal the ill or good
Of each, I bide my time till then ;
I will carve with pen a name to shine
Brighter by far than blade of thine.

“ I set my face for power and place,
My soul is toned to sullenness,
My heart holds not one sign or trace
Of love, or trust, or tenderness.
But you—your years of happiness
God knows I would not make them less.

“ And yet it were a bootless strife ;
I ran too swiftly up the way
In my uncheerful spring of life,
And wearied ere the noon of day.
I did not reach—was it a crime
That my life knew no summer-time ?

“ And you will come some summer eve
When wheels the white moon on her track,
And hear the plaintive night-bird grieve,
And heed the crickets clad in black,
Alone—not far—a little spell,
And say, ‘ Well, yes, she loved me well ;’

“ And sigh, ‘ Well, yes, I mind me now,
None were so bravely true as she ;
And yet her love was tame somehow—
It was so truly true to me ;
I wish’d her patient love had less
Of worship and of tenderness :

“ ‘ I wish it still, for thus alone
There comes a keen reproach or pain,
A feeling I dislike to own,
Half yearnings for her voice again,
Half longings for her earnest gaze
To know her mine always—always.’

“ I did not blame you—do not blame.

The stormy elements of soul
That men do scorn to tone or tame,
Or bind down unto dull control
In full fierce youth—they all are yours
With all their fierceness and their force.

“ God keep you daring, strong and true,
God keep you pure, O, very pure,
God help you to endure and do
The all He may demand of you,
Keep time-frosts from your raven hair
And your young heart without a care.

“ I make no murmur or complain,
Above me are the stars and blue
Alluring far to grand refrain ;
Before, the beautiful and true,
To love or hate, to win or lose ;
Lo ! I will now arise, and choose.

“ But should you sometime read a sign,
A name among the princely few,

While you are with your friends and wine,
Then careless turn to one or two ;
Say ' She was mine, her smiles, her tears
Were mine—were mine for years and years.' ”

DON CARLOS.

Woman ! and still the sad burthen is woman !
O most valiant, most gallant gentleman !
Frighten'd from home by the flirt of a petticoat :
Well, sigh to the moon and enjoy your delusions,
And dream that she too turns a pale face to
 heaven !
Bah ! barely your shadow goes out from her
 threshold
Before she is turning all smiles on another.
But you, grey trapper there, storm-stain'd and
 grizzled,
Gazing still dreamily into the fire,
Sure you have a tale without burthen of woman.
Come, call your far thoughts from the mountain
 or plain,
In the wars with the savage, and fight them again.

THE TRAPPER

*(Still gazing into the fire, and speaking in a low
tone as if to himself).*

Back, backward to-night is memory traversing,
Over the desert my weary feet travell'd,
Thick with the wreck of my dear heart-idols
And toppled columns of my ambition,
Red with the best of my hot heart's purple.

This then is all of the sweet life she promised ;
This then is all of the fair life I painted !
Dead, ashen apples of the Dead Sea border !
Ah yes, and worse by a thousand numbers,
Since that can be lifted away as we will it,
While desolate life with its dead hope buried
Clings on to the clay, though the soul despise it.

Down under the hill and there under the
fir-tree
By the spring, and looking far out in the valley,
She stands as she stood in the glorious Olden,

Swinging her hat in her right hand dimpled.
The other hand toys with a honey-suckle
That has tiptoed up and is trying to kiss her.
Her dark hair is twining her neck and her temples
As tendrils some beautiful Balize marble.

“O eyes of lustre and love and passion !
O radiant face like the sea-shell tinted !
White cloud with the sunbeams tangled in it !”
I cried, as I stood in the dust beneath her,
And gazed on the goddess my boy-heart worshipp’d
With a love and a passion, a part of madness.

“Dreamer,” she said, and a tinge of displeasure
Swept over her face that I should disturb her,
“All of the fair world is spread out before you ;
Go down and possess it with love and devotion,
And heart ever tender and touching as woman’s,
And life shall be fair as the first kiss of morning.”
I turn’d down the pathway, was blinded no longer ;
Another was coming, tall, manly, and bearded.

I built me a shrine in the innermost temple—
In the innermost rim of the heart's red centre,
And placed her therein, sole possessor and priestess,
And carved all her words on the walls of my temple.
They say that he woo'd her there under the fir-tree,
That he won her one eve, when the katydids
mock'd her.

He may have a maiden and call her Merinda ;
But mine is the one that stands there for ever
Leisurely swinging her hat by the ribbons.

They say she is wedded. No, not my Merinda,
For mine stands for ever there under the fir-tree
Gazing and swinging her hat by the ribbons.
They tell me her children reach up to my shoulder.
'Tis false. I did see her down under the fir-tree
When the stars were all busy a-weaving thin laces
Out of their gold and the moon's yellow tresses,
Swinging her hat as in days of the Olden.

True, that I spoke not nor ventured to touch
her—
Touch her ! I sooner would pluck the sweet Mary,

The mother of Jesus, from arms of the priesthood,
As they kneel at the altar in holy devotion.

* * * *

And was it for this that my heart was kept tender,
Fashion'd from thine, O sacristan maiden?—
That coarse men could pierce my warm heart to
the purple?

That vandals could enter and burn out its fresh-
ness?

That rude men could trample it into the ashes?
O was it for this that my heart was kept open?
I look'd in a glass, not the heart of my fellow,
Whose was the white soul I saw there reflected?
But trample the grape that the wine may flow
freely!

Beautiful priestess, be with me for ever!
You still are secure. They know not your temple,
They never can find it, or pierce it, or touch it,
Because in their hearts they know no such temple.
I turn'd my back on them like Æneas the Trojan,
Much indeed leaving in dark desolation,

But bearing one treasure alone that is dearer
Than all they possess or have fiercely torn from me ;
A maiden that stands looking far down the valley
Swinging her hat by its long purple ribbons.

DON CARLOS.

Worse and worse, and the burthen still woman,
The crucifixion of rhyme and of reason,
With the sweet Christ-truth bleeding dead be-
tween them !

Here you, young rover, or hunter, or poet,
If you've wit, here's a chance to show it,
Give us at least some rhymes that jingle,
Nor jar the soul till the senses tingle.

HUNTER *sings*.

Alone on this desolate border,
On this ruggedest rimm'd frontier,
Where the hills huddle up in disorder
Like a fold in mortal fear,
Where the mountains are out at the elbow,
In their yellow coats seedy and sere,

Where the river runs sullen and yellow
This dismallest day of the year.

I go up and go down on the granite,
Like an unholy ghost under bans.
Oh Christ ! for the eloquent quiet !
For the final folding of hands !
What am I ? Where am I going,
With these turbulent winds that are blowing ?
What sowing of winds in these lands !
And what shall I reap from such sowing
I look at the lizard that glides
Over the mossy boulders,
With green epaulets on his shoulders,
And regiment-stripes on his sides.

My feet are in dust to the ankles,
My heart, it is dustier still ;
Will never the dust be levell'd
Till the heart is laid under the hill ?
I look at the sun sliding over ;
A white cloud is swinging on hinges

And is trying his glory to cover.
But see ! his beams in the fringes
Are tangled and fasten'd in falling,
And a sailor above us is calling,
“ Untangle the ravels and fringes.”

In grim battle-lines up o'er us
Grey, shapely ships are wheeling,
Hulk, sail, and shroud revealing.
A flash, a crash appalling,
A hurling of red-hot spears,
Hark ! terrible thunder calling
In fierce infernal chorus !
Now silver sails are falling
Like silver sheens before us.

What Nelson to fame aspires
In the chartless bluer deep
Where white ships toss and tack ?
And what armed host appears ?
Lo ! I have seen their fires
In blue fields where they sleep

At night, in their bivouac ;
And they battle, bleed, and weep,
For this rain is warm as tears.

Oh ! why was I ever a dreamer ?
Better a brute on the plain,
Or one who believes his redeemer
Is greed, and gold, and gain,
Or one who can riot and revel,
Than be pierced by unbearable pain,
With poesy darling, in travail,
That will not be born from the brain.

O bride by the breathing ocean
With lustrous and brimming eye,
Pour out the Lethean potion
Till a lustrum rolleth by,
Lulling a soul's commotion,
Plashing against the sky—
Calming a living spectre
With its two hands toss'd on high.

Come to me, darling, adorning
Like summer this desolate region,
And come with step stately as morning,
Or come like the march of a legion,
Or come without caution or warning,
Or come like the loud tycoon,
Or in majesty like to the moon,
But come, and come soon, over-soon.

Are sea winds mild and mellow
Where my sun-brown'd babies are,
A-weaving brown, silken, and yellow
Seam'd sun-beams in their hair?
Go on and on in disorder,
O cloud with the silver rim,
While tangled up in your border,
The glinting sunbeams swim.

DON CARLOS (*yawning*).

Oh ! why indulge in such gipsy jargon,
Since maids must mock, and men slay to protect
them

A song like to this with a savagest silence ?
I fear, young man, you mistake your calling,
Why not fall the forests or plant red potatoes ?
Or what of the art of raising green pumpkins,
And tall-topp'd corn with its silks of silver ?
Or may be some sheep could endure your measures
On the Yamhill hills, if you must aspire,
As you swing a crook, and so sweep your lyre.

HUNTER.

The bird sings in the busy spring,
The sea sings in his booming swells,
And all his pink and pearly shells
Sing of the sea, and ever sing.
You break the shell or bear it far
From ocean as the morning star ;
Yet still it sings, fast bound, or free,
In mellow measures, of the sea.
And I shall sing and sing and sing,
Sing ill or well, though men do chide,
Until a hand in mine is laid
To lead unto the other side.

Afar a ploughboy's song is heard,
In chorus with the building bird,
My song is his—his my reward.

I heard a redbreast on the wall,
And then I heard the truants' call,
And cast a storm of earth and stone.
He flew, and perch'd him far and lone,
Above a rushing cataract,
Where never living thing had track'd—
Where mate nor man nor living thing
Could ever heed or hear him sing;
And there he sang his song of spring,
As if a world were listening.
He sang because he could but sing,
Sweet bird, for he was born to sing.

A million hearts have felt as much
As ever prince of poets told,
With souls that scorn'd a colder touch
Than love refined to finest gold,
Yet drove the team and turn'd the mould,

And whistled songs and tragedies
That would have thrill'd to rage or tears ;
The beam and moon their lance and shield,
A moat, the furrow deep and broad ;
And lived content through all their years
In one long Paradise of peace,
Unheard beyond their broken sod.
And shall I then be less than these ?

They kept their fields, their flocks, increase,
And walk'd their ideal world in peace,
They would not drag it down to fit
The mass of man with golden god—
They could not drag man up to it,
So lived and died without complain.
All tuneless in their full refrain,
They break in billows through the sod.

A million poets God hath wrought ;
But very few have made pretence,
And fewer still found utterance,
For words are shackles unto thought,

And fancies, fetter'd down by words,
Droop dull and tame as prison'd birds,
Lose all the bright hues of the sky,
As does the claspéd butterfly.

*As the YOUNG HUNTER concludes his song DON
CARLOS, apart, and looking down the mountain
to the declining moon, continues :*

Well, he would make you a good maid-servant ;
I could say " She can come to you well recom-
mended ; "

For behold he has sung till they sleep most
soundly.

The thin sullen moon, pale faced and crooked,
Like a half starved kine, a most vicious heifer,
Is sliding down in all haste from heaven,
To gore in the flank of yon sleeping mountain.
My comrades sleep, and does sleep all nature,
The world has a rest and a truce till to-morrow ;
There is peace, and surcease of sin and sorrow ;
All things take rest but I—

HUNTER.

And I only,
Your minstrel and whilom your roving young
hunter.

[Loosening his hair from his shoulders.]

O, Don Carlos, look kindly upon me ;
With my hand on your arm and my dark brow
lifted,
Level to yours, do you not now know me ?
'Tis your own, own Ina, you loved by the ocean,
In the warm spiced winds from the far Cathay.
O welcome me now after all my struggles,
And years of waiting and weary journeys.

DON CARLOS, *bitterly.*

And he received her with arms extended,
And they were wedded, and lived long and happily,
At least so runneth the oft-told story ;
But life is prosy, and my soul uprises
Against you, madam, as you stand before me
With the smell of the deadman still upon you,

And your dark hair wet from his death-damp
forehead.

You are not my Ina, for she is a memory,
A marble chisell'd, in my heart's dark chamber
Set up for ever, and nought can change her ;
And you are a stranger, and the gulf between us
Is wide as the Plains, and as deep as Pacific.
No ! Lips blood-stain'd and your limbs polluted
Shall tempt me not from my lordly mountains.

But now, good-bye. In your serape folded,
There in the heat of the pine-knot fire,
May you sleep as sound as you will be secure,
And on the morrow—now mark me, madam—
When to-morrow comes, why, you will turn you
To the right or left as did Father Abram.
Good-night, for ever and for aye, good-bye ;
My bitter is sweet and your truth is a lie.

INA (*letting go his arm and stepping back*).

Well then ! 'tis over, and 'tis well thus ended ;
I am well escaped from my life's devotion.

The waters of bliss are a waste of bitterness ;
The day of joy I did join hands over,
As a bow of promise when my years were weary,
And set high up as a brazen serpent
To look upon when I else had fainted
In the burning desert, while you sipp'd ices
And snowy sherbets, and roam'd unfetter'd,
Is a deadly asp in the fruit and flowers,
That you in your bitterness now bring to me ;
But its fangs unfasten and it glides down from me,
From a Cleopatra of cold white marble.

I have done what I would do over and over,
Did I find one worthy of so much devotion,
And standing here with my clean hands folded
Above a bosom whose crime is courage,
The only regret my heart discovers,
Is that I should do and have dared so greatly
For the love of one who deserved so little.
And as for my lips' and my limbs' pollution,
They are purer than any strong man's new-wedded,
Stain'd without purpose in his coarse brute-passion.

Nay, say no more, nor attempt to approach me ;
This ten-feet line lying now between us
Shall never be less while the land has measure.
See ! night is forgetting the east in the heavens ;
The birds pipe shrill and the beasts howl answer ;
The red sun reaches his arms from the ocean,
And the dusk and the dawn kiss hands, good-bye,
But not for ever as do you and I.





BURNS AND BYRON.



*Eld Druid oaks of Ayr!
Precepts! Poems! Pages!
Lessons! Leaves, and Volumes!
Arches! Pillars! Columns
In corridors of ages!
Grand patriarchal sages
Lifting palms in prayer!*

*The Druid beards are drifting
And shifting to and fro,
In gentle breezes lifting,
That bat-like come and go,
The while the moon is sifting
A sheen of shining snow,
On all these blossoms lifting
Their blue eyes from below.*

*No, 'tis not phantoms walking
That you hear rustling there,
But bearded Druids talking,
And turning leaves in prayer.
No, not a night-bird singing,
Nor breeze the broad bough swinging,
But that bough holds a censer,
And swings it to and fro.
'Tis Sunday eve remember,
That's why they chant so low.*



BURNS AND BYRON.

NOTE.

THE day before my departure for Europe last summer, a small party sailed out to the beautiful sea-front of Saucelété, lying in the great bay of San Francisco, forever green in its crown of California laurel; and there the fairest hands of the youngest and fairest city of the New World wove a wreath of bay for the tomb of Byron. I brought it over the Rocky Mountains, and the seas, and placed it above the dust of the soldier-poet, as desired. A gentle and a just rebuke was this action of the ladies of the Great West to one of their sex of the Eastern States, who was just then devoting her declining years to the defamation of the dead. The wreath hangs now on the dark and dusty wall of the church at Hucknall Tokard above the tattered coat-of-arms of the Byrons, and the small stained tablet placed there by the Poet's sister.

Having come directly from Dumfries, I am bound to say that the contrast between the tombs of the two immortal modern poets was at least remarkable.

But in my pilgrimage to places sacred to the memory of Burns I found none equal in interest to Ayr, the Doon, and their environs; perhaps it was because these places witnessed his birth, his boyhood, and his hard life's battles.



LINGER in the autumn noon,

I listen to the partridge call,

I watch the yellow leaflets fall

And drift adown the dimpled Doon.

I lean me o'er the ivy-grown

Old brig, where vandal tourists' tools

Have ribb'd out names that would be known,

Are known—known as a herd of fools.

Down Ailsa Craig the sun declines

With lances levell'd here and there—

The tinted thorns! the trailing vines!

O braes of Doon! so fond! so fair!

So passing fair! so more than fond!

The Poet's place of birth beyond,

Beyond the mellow bells of Ayr!

I hear the milk-maid's twilight song
Come bravely through the storm-bent oaks ;
Beyond the white surf's sullen strokes
 Beat in a chorus deep and strong ;
I hear the sounding forge afar,
And rush and rumble of the car,
 The steady tinkle of the bell
Of lazy, laden home-bound cows
That stop to bellow and to browse ;
 I breathe the soft sea wind as well ;
And now would fain arouse, arise ;
I count the red lights in the skies ;
 I yield as to a fairy spell.

Heard ye the feet of flying horse ? -
Heard ye the bogles in the air
That clutch at Tam O' Shanter's mare,
 That flies this mossy brig across ?

O Burns ! where bid ? where bide you now ?
Where are you in this night's full noon,
Great master of the pen and plough ?

Might you not on yon slanting beam
Of moonlight, kneeling to the Doon,
Descend once to this hallow'd stream ?
Sure yon stars yield enough of light
For heaven to spare your face one night.

O Burns ! another name for song,
Another name for passion—pride ;
For love and poesy allied ;
For strangely blended right and wrong.

I picture you as one who kneel'd
A stranger at his own hearthstone ;
One knowing all, yet all unknown,
One seeing all, yet all conceal'd ;
The fitful years you linger'd here,
A lease of peril and of pain ;
And I am thankful yet again
The gods did love you, ploughman ! peer !

In all your own and other lands,
I hear your touching songs of cheer ;

The peasant and the lordly peer
Above your honour'd dust strike hands.

A touch of tenderness is shown
In this unselfish love of Ayr,
And it is well, you earn'd it fair ;
For all unhelmeted, alone,
You proved a ploughman's honest claim
To battle in the lists of fame ;
You earn'd it as a warrior earns
His laurels fighting for his land,
And died—it was your right to go.
O eloquence of silent woe !
The Master leaning reach'd a hand,
And whisper'd, " It is finish'd, Burns !"

O sad, sweet singer of a Spring !
Yours was a chill uncheerful May,
And you knew no full days of June ;
You ran too swiftly up the way
And wearied soon ! so over-soon !
You sang in weariness and woe ;

You falter'd, and God heard you sing,
 Then touch'd your hand and led you so,
 You found life's hill-top low, so low,
 You cross'd its summit long ere noon;
 Thus sooner than one would suppose
 Some weary feet do find repose.

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O cold and cruel Nottingham !
 In disappointment and in tears,
 Sad, lost, and lonely here I am
 To question, "Is this Nottingham,
 Of which I dream'd for years and years ?"
 I seek in vain for name or sign
 Of him who made this mould a shrine,
 A Mecca to the fair and fond
 Beyond the seas, and still beyond.

Where white clouds crush their drooping wings
 Against the snow-crown'd battlements,
 And peaks that flash like silver tents,

Where Sacramento's fountain springs,
And proud Columbia frets his shore
Of sombre boundless wood and wold,
And lifts his yellow sands of gold
In plaintive murmurs evermore,
And snowy dimpled Tahoe smiles
And where white breakers from the sea,
In solid phalanx knee to knee,
Surround the calm Pacific Isles,
Then run and reach unto the lands
In voice of pain, with pallid hands,
And spread their thin palms on the sands,
Is he supreme—there understood ;
The free can understand the free,
The brave and good the brave and good.

Yea, he did sin ; who hath reveal'd
That he was more than man, or less ?
He sinn'd no more, but less conceal'd
Than they who cloak'd their follies o'er
And then cast stones in his distress ;

He scorn'd to make the good seem more.
Or make the bitter sin seem less.

When all his fervid wayward love
Brought back no olive-branch or dove,
Or love or trust from anyone,
Proud, all unpitied, and alone
He lived to make himself unknown,
Disdaining love and yielding none.
Like some high lifted sea-girt stone
That could not stoop, but all the days
With proud brow turning to the breeze,
Felt seas blown from the south, and seas
Blown from the north, and many ways ;
Then fell, but stirr'd the seas as far
As winds and waves and waters are.

The meek-eyed stars are cold and white,
And steady, fix'd for all the years ;
The comet burns the wings of night,
And dazzles elements and spheres,
Then dies in beauty and a blaze
Of light, blown far through other days.

The poet's passion, sense of pride,
His sentiment, the wooing throng
Of sweet temptations that betide
The wild and wayward child of song,
The world knows not: I lift a hand
To those who know, who understand.

In men whom men condemn as ill
I find so much of goodness still,
In men whom men pronounce divine
I find so much of sin and blot,
I hesitate to draw a line
Between the two, where God has not.

* * * * *

In sad but beautiful decay
Grey Hucknall kneels into the dust,
And, cherishing her sacred trust,
Does blend her clay with lordly clay.

The ancient Abbey's breast is broad,
And stout her massive walls of stone,

But let him lie, repose alone
Ungather'd with the great of God,
In dust, by his fierce fellow-man.
Some one, some day, loud-voiced will speak
And say the broad breast was not broad,
The walls of stone were all too weak
To hold the proud dust, in their plan ;
The hollow of God's great right hand
Receives it; let it rest with God.

No sign or cryptic stone or cross
Unto the passing world has said,
"He died, and we deplore his loss."
No sound of sandall'd pilgrim's tread,
Disturbs the pilgrim's peaceful rest,
Or frets the proud impatient breast.
The bat flits through the broken pane,
The black swift swallow gathers moss,
And builds in peace above his head,
Then goes, then comes, and builds again.
And it is well ; not otherwise
Would he, the grand sad singer, will.

The serene peace of Paradise
He sought—'tis his—the storm is still.
Secure in his eternal fame,
And blended pity and respect,
He does not feel the cold neglect,
And England does not fear the shame.

THE END.





